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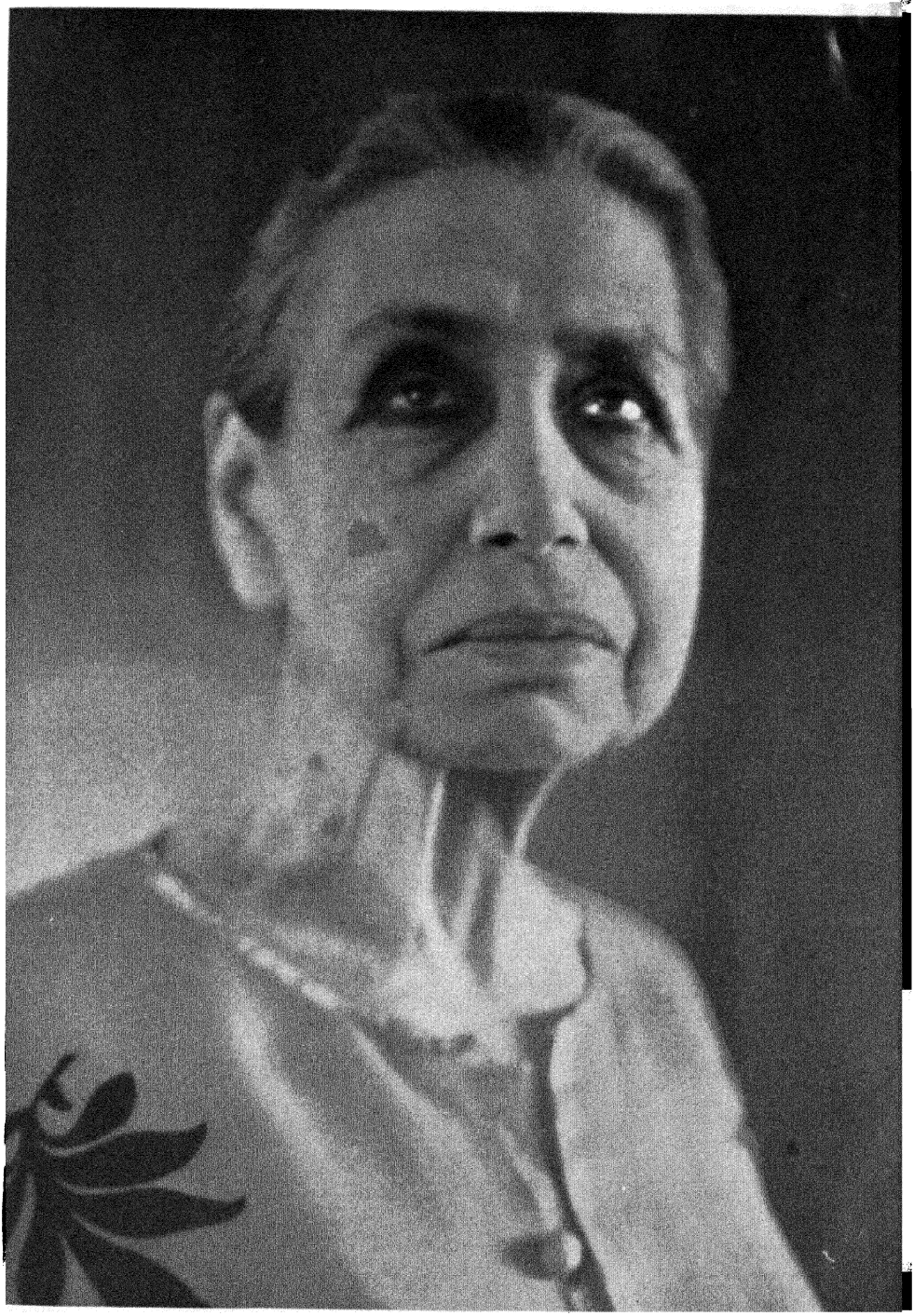

THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE

Sixteenth Number

1960
BOMBAY

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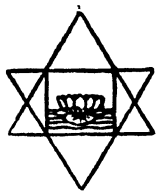
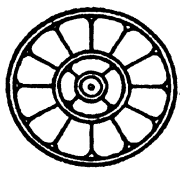


Certainly, the supramental manifestation does not bring peace, purity, force, power or knowledge only; these give the necessary conditions for the final realisation, are part of it, but Love, Beauty and Ananda are the essence of its fulfilment. And although the supreme Ananda comes with the supreme fulfilment, there is no real reason why there should not be the Love and Ananda and Beauty on the way also. Some have found that even at an early stage before there was any other experience. But the secret of it is in the heart, not in the mind—the heart that opens its inner door and through it the radiance of the soul looks out in a blaze of trust and self-giving. Before that inner fire the debates of the mind and its difficulties wither away and the path however long or arduous becomes a sunlit road not only towards but through love and Ananda.

[*On Yoga*, II.]

Sri Aurobindo



We have only one thing to do : the perfect surrender of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, the total self-giving to the Divine Will, whatever happens, even in the midst of the night.

There is the night and there is the sun, the night and the sun, again the night, many nights, but one must cling to this will to surrender, cling to it, as through a tempest and give up everything into the hands of the Supreme Lord, until the day when it is all Sun for ever, the total Victory.

[*Bulletin*, Feb. '59.]

The Mother

THE MOTHER

Sri Aurobindo Circle - Sixteenth Number

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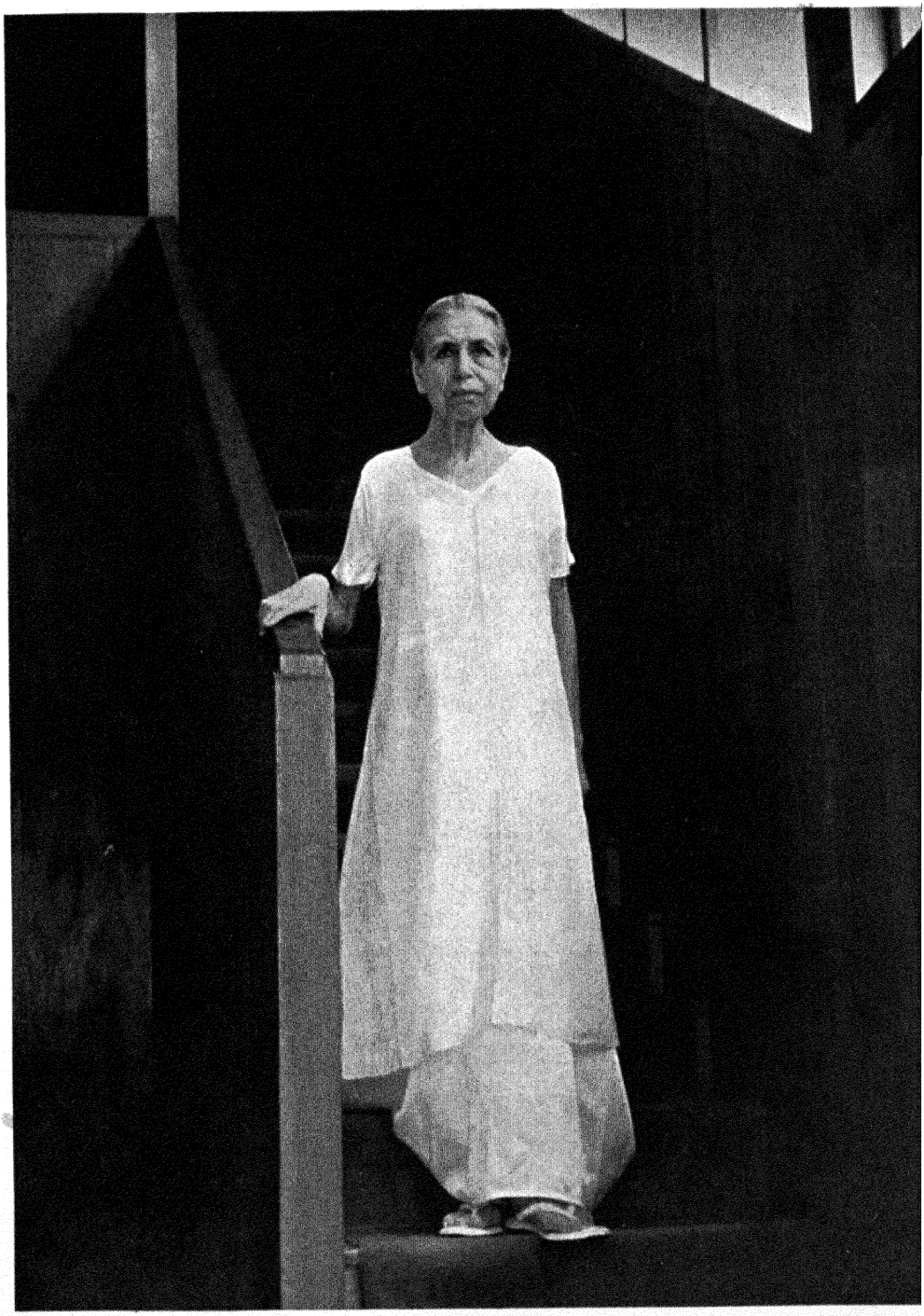


THE MOTHER

Questions—Answers

Question I :

In the November 1958 *issue of the "Bulletin of Physical Education" (page* 19*), in Your Answer entitled "The New Birth" You have said as follows :*

"To comfort you I may say that by the very fact that you live upon earth at this moment...you absorb with the air that you breathe this new supramental substance which is spreading in earth's atmosphere and it is preparing in you things that will manifest all on a sudden, as soon as you have taken the decisive step. Whether that will help you or not to take this decisive step is another question which has to be studied, because the experiences that are happening and will now happen more and more being of a quite new character, one cannot know beforehand what will come to pass; one must study and after a close study one would be able to say with certainty whether this supramental substance will make the work of the new birth easy or not. I shall tell you about it a little later on. For the moment it is better not to count on these things, but simply to take to the way for the birth into the spiritual life."

Can you now say with certainty whether this supramental substance will help decisively to realise this new birth ?

MOTHER : EVIDENTLY.

Question II :

In Your Talk entitled "The True Adventure" in the November 1957 *issue of the "Bulletin of Physical Education" (page* 2*), You have said :*

"Last year when I announced to you the manifestation of the supramental consciousness and light and force, I should have added that it was an event forerunner of the birth of a new world."

This means that the new world was born after the supramental consciousness manifested. You have fixed 29.2.1956 *as the date of the supramental manifestation. Which date after that should be taken as the date of the birth of the new world ?*

MOTHER : Half an hour later.

Question III :

There is a change in Sri Aurobindo's symbol on the medals that you distributed on 29th February 1960. *The two triangles, in the middle of which the square contain-*

ing the lotus is usually put, are missing and in their place there are sun's rays emitting from the square. Surely, you must have made this significant change for some important reason ? Can you say what is the reason of this change ?

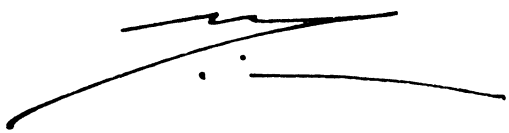
MOTHER : I never intended to give Sri Aurobindo's symbol.

The design on the medal signifies—

the twelve rays of the new creation issue from the manifestation of the Avatar :

lotus	—	Avatar
square	—	manifestation
12 rays	—	new creation.

26-3-1960



Letters of Sri Aurobindo

SRI AUROBINDO'S light is not a light of the illumined mind—it is the divine Illumination which may act on any plane.

7-9-1933

* *

There is no necessity for everybody to become artists or writers or do work of a public character. X and Y have their own capacities and it is sufficient for the present if they train themselves to make them useful for the Mother's work. Others have great capacities which they are content to use in the small and obscure work of the Ashram without figuring before the public in something big. What is important now is to get the true consciousness from above, get rid of the ego (which nobody has yet done) and learn to be an instrument of the Divine Force. After that the manifestation can take place, not before.

24-10-1935

* *

Fear in these experiences is a thing one must get rid of; if there is any danger, a call to the Mother is sufficient, but in reality there is none—for the protection is there.

It is true that there is in most people here this running after those who come from outside especially if they are well-known or distinguished. It is a common weakness of human nature and, like other weaknesses of human nature, the sadhaks seem not inclined to get rid of it. It is because they do not live sufficiently within, so the vital gets excited or attracted when something important or somebody important (or considered so) comes in from outside.

29-11-1935

* *

The egoism in yourself of which you speak belongs to the relation of one human being with another and is common to almost all men and women,—

it is extremely difficult to get rid of, but if one sees it clearly and determines not to have it, then it can first be brought under control and then dismissed from the nature. But the egoism which made people go away from here through pride in their sadhana and attachment to their supposed greatness of their experiences is another kind and far more dangerous spiritually. You do not have it and I do not think you are in danger of ever having it.

The experience of being with the Mother and speaking to her is one that one can easily have when one is writing to her and is true because some part of the being does actually meet with her and open itself to her when one writes one's experiences.

23-12-1935

* *

The dream was a meeting with the Mother on the vital plane. In these dreams many of the details are symbolic, but it is not always easy to say what a particular symbol signifies, as here the condition of the hand. But the later part of the dream is clear enough. The man there symbolises that ego tendency in the human nature which makes a man, when some realisation comes to think how great a realisation is this and how great a sadhak am I and to call others to see and admire —perhaps he thinks, like the man in the dream "I have seen the Divine, indeed feel I am one with the Divine,—I will call everybody to see that". This is a tendency which has injured the sadhana of many and sometimes ruined the sadhana altogether. In the thoughts you describe you came to see something in yourself which is there more or less in all human beings, the desire to be thought well of by others, to occupy a high place in their esteem or their affection, to have honour, position, admiration. When anybody joins this feeling to the idea of sadhana, then the disposition to do the sadhana for that and not purely and simply for the sake of the Divine comes in and there must be disturbance or else an obstruction in the sadhana itself or if in spite of it spiritual experience comes, then there is the danger of his misusing the experience to magnify his ego like the man in the dream. All these dreams are coming to you to give you a vivid and concrete knowledge and experience of what these human defects are so that you may find it easier to throw them out, to recognise them when they come in the waking state and refuse them entrance. These things are not in yourself only but in all human nature; they are the things one has to get rid of or else to guard against it so that one's consecration to the Divine may be complete, selfless, true and pure.

5-11-1935

* *

All who came here did not come with a conscious seeking for the Divine. It is without the mind knowing it the soul within that brought them here. In your case it was that and the relation your soul had with the Mother. Once here the force of the Divine works upon the human nature till a way is opened for the soul within to come out from the veil. The conscious seeking for the Divine does not by itself prevent the struggle with the ignorance of the nature; it is only self-giving to the Mother that can do that.

7-11-1935

* *

What you have noticed about the disturbances is true. There are now two consciousnesses in you, the new one that is growing and what is left of the old. The old has something in it which is a habit of the human vital,—the tendency to keep any touch of grief, anger, vexation etc. or any kind of emotional, vital or mental disturbance, to make much of it, to prolong it, not to wish to let it go, to return to it even when the cause of disturbance is past and could be forgotten, always to remember it and bring it up when it can. This is a common trait of human nature and a quite customary movement. The new consciousness on the contrary does not want these things and when they happen throws them off as quickly as possible. When the new consciousness is fully grown and established, then the disturbances will be altogether rejected. Even if the causes of them happen, there will be no response of grief, anger, vexation etc. in the nature.

October 1936

* *

Q : There are two ways of making an offering to the Mother : one is to offer an act at Her feet as one might offer a flower; the other is to withdraw one's personality altogether and to feel as if She is doing all the actions which one performs. In the first way there is duality between the worker and Her; but in the second there is a close intimacy and union.

Which of these two ways is better for the sadhana ?

A : There is no need to ask which is the better as they are not mutually exclusive. It is the mind that regards them as opposites. The psychic being can offer the act while the nature is passive to the Force (the ego being expunged

or having withdrawn) and feels the Mother's Force doing the act and her Presence in it.

5-11-1938

* *

Q : X told me that she became conscious of her psychic being coming to the front in the form of a baby. She also said that the psychic being *always* appears to everyone in the form of a baby. Is this true ? My own impression is that this is a subjective symbol peculiar to X only, perhaps because she is very emotional. I would like to know if others also have always seen the psychic being in this form and if it is usual for it to manifest in this way.

A : It is not a fact that the psychic being always appears as a baby—it is sometimes seen symbolically as a new born baby; many see it as a child of varying ages—it is a very common and usual experience; it is not peculiar to emotional natures. It has several significances such as the new birth of the consciousness into the true psychic nature, the still young growth of this new being, the trust, reliance, dependence of the child on the Mother.

13-7-1937

* *

Even in the world there have been relations between man and woman in which sex could not intervene—purely psychic relations. The consciousness of sex difference would be there no doubt, but without coming in as a source of desire or disturbance into the relation. But naturally it needs a certain psychic development before that is possible.

5-6-1936

* *

What you saw about the outwardgoing movements was certainly not imagination, it was a true and accurate perception and vision of their action. To feel yourself separate from them and see them is the right inner condition necessary for getting rid of them in the end altogether.

Concentration is very helpful and necessary—the more one concentrates (of course in the limits of the body's capacity without straining it), the more the force of the Yoga grows. But you must be prepared for the meditation being

sometimes not successful and not get upset by it—for that variability of the meditations happens to everybody. There are different causes for it. But it is mostly something physical that interferes, either the need of the body to take time to assimilate what has come or being done; sometimes inertia or dullness due to causes such as those you mention or others. The best thing is to remain quiet and not get nervous or dejected—till the force acts again.

21-12-1934

* *

Q : During the last few weeks I have very strongly felt a strange and inexplicable disparity between my subtle body and the physical body. My physical body is in some way not adapted to the power and possibilities inherent in my subtle body. This is not due to any lack of purity or plasticity in the physical body in the normal sense, but to a basic discrepancy in the physical cells themselves. I first became aware of this discrepancy when I was 5 years old and the feeling of it has come to me very powerfully often in my life. It seems to me that my subtle body has somehow made a "mistake", consciously, unconsciously, or in spite of itself, in the choice of its physical organism. Is such a "mistake" possible ? Is there any way by which it can be rectified by the consciousness in this earth-life ? or is it an insurmountable limitation to which the body has to reconcile itself until it is again free to choose another body in the next life ?

A : All limitations can be surmounted but if they are ingrained in the formation of the present being, it can only be done by calling in a higher power and consciousness than that of the personal mind and will. The higher consciousness can by what it brings correct or rebuild what is defective in the personal nature.

5-4-1938

* *

Q : Since the death of her son two years ago, X has been experiencing what she calls a "deep sleep" which comes upon her suddenly at intervals during the day when she is wide awake. It comes upon her at the most unexpected times —e.g. when she is writing or talking to someone. It comes and overpowers her so suddenly that she has no time to exert her will to resist it. She simply falls without a moment's notice into what seems like a deep sleep which lasts sometimes for two to three hours. When she awakes, she feels as if she has come out from a heavy anaesthetic. No impression is left in her conscious mind of what might have happened during the sleep. She is in quite good health now and yet this

"sleep" is becoming more and more frequent and she does not know how to shake it off because it seizes her suddenly. She thinks there is something abnormal about it and is very much distressed. She has requested me to ask you for an explanation.

A : It looks as if it were an exteriorisation in which she goes out in her vital body. When one does so consciously and at will, it is all right, but this unconscious exteriorisation is not always safe. The important question is what effect it has on her. If she comes out of it strong and refreshed or quite normal, there is no cause for distress or anxiety; if she comes out exhausted or depressed, then there are forces that are pulling her out into the vital world to the detriment of her vital sheath and it should not continue.

12-7-1937

* *

Q : How is it that most of the Europeans keep always cheerful, where as in the Indians there is so much gloom and moroseness in family life, and cunning, strategy and selfishness in social life ? Half of the cheerfulness in Europeans, I suspect, comes not so much from intrinsic joy or humour as from the discipline of having always good manners.

A : It is largely the latter—to show one's bad moods in society is considered bad form and indicating want of self-control; so people in Europe usually keep their worse side for their own house and family and don't show it outside. Some do but are considered as either neurasthenic or as having a "sâle caractère" but apart from that Europeans have, I think, more vitality than Indians and are more elastic and resilient and less nervously sensitive. There are plenty of exceptions of course, but generally, I think, that is true. In family life it is more of the rajasic ego than gloom and moroseness that creates trouble. Gloom and moroseness generally meets with ridicule as a 'Byronic' or tragic affectation, so it is very soon discouraged. Cunning, strategy and selfishness in social life is considered in France at least to be more a characteristic of peasant life—in the middle class it is supposed to be the sign of the "arriviste".

6-1-1937

The New Society

AS from the mixing of various elements an unforeseen form emerges, so there may be a greater unknown something concealed and in preparation, not yet formulated in the experimental laboratory of Time, not yet disclosed in the design of Nature. And that then, some greater unexpected birth from the stress of the evolution may be the justifying result of which this unquiet age of gigantic ferment, chaos of ideas and inventions, clash of enormous forces, creation and catastrophe and dissolution is actually amid the formidable agony and tension of this great imperfect body and soul of mankind in creative labour.

* *

Two great words of the divine Truth have forced themselves insistently on our minds through the crash of the ruin and the breath of the tempest and are now the leading words of the hoped-for reconstruction,—freedom and unity. But everything depends, first, upon the truth of our vision of them, secondly, upon the sincerity with which we apply it, last and especially on the inwardness of our realisation. Vain will be the mechanical construction of unity, if unity is not in the heart of the race and if it be made only a means for safeguarding and organising our interests; the result will then be only, as it was in the immediate past, a fiercer strife and new outbreaks of revolution and anarchy. No paltering mechanisms which have the appearance but not the truth of freedom, will help us; the new structure, however imposing, will only become another prison and compel a fresh struggle for liberation. The one safety for man lies in learning to live from within outward, not depending on institutions and machinery to perfect him, but out of his growing inner perfection availing to shape a more perfect form and frame of life; for by this inwardness we shall best be able both to see the truth of the high things which we now only speak with our lips and form into outward intellectual constructions, and to apply their truth sincerely to all our outward living. If we are to found the kingdom of God in humanity, we must first know God and see and live the diviner truth of our being in ourselves; otherwise how shall a new manipulation of the constructions of the reason and scientific systems of efficiency which have failed us in the past, avail to establish it? It is because there are plenty of signs that the old error continues and only a minority, leaders perhaps in light, but not yet in action, are striving to see more clearly, inwardly and truly, that we must expect as yet rather the last twilight which divides the dying from the unborn

age than the real dawning. For a time, since the mind of man is not yet ready, the old spirit and method may yet be strong and seem for a short while to prosper; but the future lies with the men and nations who first see beyond both the glare and the dusk the gods of the morning and prepare themselves to be fit instruments of the Power that is pressing towards the light of a greater ideal.

* *

We can only get good hold of the right end of the great ideas which should govern our ways of living when we begin to understand that their healthful process is from within outward, and that the opposite method, the mechanical, ends always by turning living realities into formal conventions. No doubt, to man the animal the mechanical alone seems to be real; but to man the soul, man the thinker through whom we arrive at our inner manhood, only that is true which he can feel as a truth within him and feel without as his self-expression. All else is a deceptive charlatanry, an acceptance of shows for truths, of external appearances for realities, which are so many devices to keep him in bondage.

* *

The evolution of a socialistic society and the resurgence of Asia must effect great changes and yet they may not realise the larger human hope. Socialism may bring in a greater equality and a closer association into human life, but if it is only a material change, it may miss other needed things and even aggravate the mechanical burden of humanity and crush more heavily towards the earth its spirit. The resurgence of Asia, if it means only a redressing or shifting of the international balance, will be a step in the old circle, not an element of the renovation, not a condition of the step forward and out of the groove that is now felt however vaguely to be the one thing needful.

* *

An international equality and cooperation in place of the past disorder or barbaric order of domination and exploitation is indeed a first image that we have formed of the better future. But that is not all : it is only a framework. It may be at lowest a novel machinery of international convenience, it may be at most a better articulated body for the human race. The spirit, the power, the idea and will that are meant to inform or use it is the greater question, the face and direction of destiny that will be decisive.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Compiled from *War and Self-Determination* by Sri Aurobindo)

Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo

(Continued from the previous Number)

III

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

THE most fundamental and the most difficult problem of sociology is the relation of the individual to society. A full understanding of the true nature of this relationship requires an analysis not only of the social, political and economic factors involved but also of the deeper psychological, philosophical and spiritual factors. The different conclusions to which the analysis of these complex factors leads have given rise to different interpretations of this relationship at the hands of various social thinkers, and have also provided the bases for different types of social orders of the past and the present as also of the idealistic social systems of the future.

The importance of this problem being so fundamental, it has engaged the attention of social philosophers since the earliest times, and it is still the burning question of all socio-political thought and policy. Innumerable theories have been propounded which stress one aspect or the other of this complex relationship by taking a partial and one-sided view of it and which are therefore misleading and even harmful. These theories could be broadly classified into two main categories : the individualistic, which stress the value of the individual at the expense of society, and the collectivistic, which take the opposite view and emphasize the importance of the society at the cost of the individual. As students of sociology we must examine these theories before we can precisely formulate and fully appreciate Sri Aurobindo's comprehensive theory showing the true nature of this relationship.

In the history of the Western social thought the most influential of the individualistic and the collectivistic theories have been the social contract theory and the social organism theory respectively. We shall consider and evaluate both these theories in the light of Sri Aurobindo's viewpoint.

(I)

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

Several social thinkers have advocated this theory over many centuries, but its greatest exponents in the modern period have been Hobbes and Locke in the

seventeenth and Rousseau in the eighteenth century. Different thinkers have expressed the theory in different forms and have also derived different conclusions from it to suit their predilections. But the essential idea common to all is that society has originated as a result of a deliberate contract between the individual men who previously lived in a "state of nature" uncontrolled by any social regulations. The condition of men in this "state of nature" is viewed differently by different thinkers. Some, like Hobbes, hold that it was a state of "continual fear and danger of death" in which the life of man was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". Others, like Rousseau, conceive it to be a state of idyllic felicity in which men lived untrammelled by any artificial bonds of society. According to Hobbes this original natural state was too inconvenient to be tolerated, while according to Rousseau it was too idyllic to last. In either case, men were led to abandon it and substitute for it a social state of organised common life with his fellow-men. In both these views society is supposed to originate from some kind of an original contract between the individuals themselves. Their main contention is that society is a voluntary arrangement deliberately set up by man for certain conveniences. It is an artificial device which he has contrived for his needs and there is no natural or inherent necessity or obligation for its existence or continuation.

The social contract theory in its different forms has exerted very great influence on the political development of Europe. Rousseau's book, "Social Contract", was to a considerable extent responsible for the French and American revolutions, and the constitution-makers of a number of European countries in the eighteenth century drew their inspiration from it. In the nineteenth century, however, the main concept of the theory was found to be unsound and it has now been mostly discarded, though traces of its influence still linger on in current socio-political thought.

The theory is now abandoned because it has been found to be historically and logically untenable. Its main contention that the social state of men was preceded by an original natural state in which they lived in complete isolation, entirely free from all social regulation, cannot be supported by any historical evidence. In fact all the facts of history and prehistory show that from the very beginning of his appearance on earth men have always lived in some form of group-life. The control of the group over the individual has been a common feature of all early social life and the liberation of the individual from this control is a subsequent phenomenon. As Sri Aurobindo maintains :

"If we consult only the available facts of history and sociology, we must suppose that our race began with the all-engrossing group to which the individual was entirely subservient and that increasing individuality is a circumstance of human growth, a fruit of increasing conscious Mind. Originally, we may suppose, man was altogether gregarious, association his first necessity for survival; since survival is the first necessity of all being, the individual could be nothing but

an instrument for the strength and safety of the group, and if we add to strength and safety growth, efficiency, self-assertion as well as self-preservation, this is still the dominant idea of all collectivism. This turn is a necessity born of circumstance and environment. Looking more into fundamental things we perceive that in Matter uniformity is the sign of the group; free variation and individual development progress with the growth of Life and Mind. If then we suppose man to be an evolution of mental being in Matter and out of Matter, we must assume that he begins with uniformity and subservience of the individual and proceeds towards variety and freedom of the individual. The necessity of circumstance and environment and the inevitable law of his fundamental principles of being would then point to the same conclusion, the same process of his historic and prehistoric evolution."[1]

Sri Aurobindo, however, does not reject the idea of man's original "unsocial" state as entirely erroneous. There is, according to him, a truth behind it which, if rightly interpreted, cannot be ignored :

"But there is also the ancient tradition of humanity, which it is never safe to ignore or treat as mere fiction, that the social state was preceded by another, free and unsocial. According to modern scientific ideas, if such a state ever existed, and that is far from certain, it must have been not merely unsocial but anti-social; it must have been the condition of man as an isolated animal, living as the beast of prey, before he became in the process of his development an animal of the pack. But the tradition is rather that of a golden age in which he was freely social without society. Not bound by laws or institutions but living by natural instinct or free knowledge, he held the right law of his living in himself and needed neither to prey on his fellows nor to be restrained by the iron yoke of the collectivity. We may say, if we will, that here poetic or idealistic imagination played upon a deep-seated race-memory; early civilised man read his growing ideal of a free, unorganised, happy association into his race-memory of an unorganised, savage and anti-social existence. But it is also possible that our progress has not been a development in a straight line, but in cycles, and that in those cycles there have been periods of at least partial realisation in which men did become able to live according to the high dream of philosophic Anarchism, associated by the inner law of love and light and right being, right thinking, right action and not coerced to unity by kings and parliaments, laws and policings and punishments with all that tyrant unease, petty or great oppression and repression and ugly train of selfishness and corruption which attend the forced government of man by man. It is even possible that our original state was an instinctive animal spontaneity of free and fluid association and that our final ideal state will be an enlightened, intuitive spontaneity of free and fluid association. Our destiny may be the conversion of an original animal association

[1] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, pp. 15-16.

into a community of the gods. Our progress may be a devious round leading from the easy and spontaneous uniformity and harmony which reflects Nature to the self-possessed unity which reflects the Divine."[1]

Sri Aurobindo thus does not altogether dismiss the theory which traces man's development from an original "unsocial" state to an organised social state, but gives it a new interpretation of a psychological character. Instead of considering this development either as a fall from an original golden age or a progress from a primitive brutish existence, he conceives it as a cyclic evolution corresponding to a similar evolution of man's consciousness.

In any case, the idea that man originally lived in an isolated state without any kind of association with others and that society arose as a result of a voluntary aggreement or contract which he later set up with them is entirely fallacious. From his very origin as a species on earth man has always lived in association with his fellow-men, though the nature and forms of that association have undergone constant change. Society is not something which man has at some time deliberately created for his convenience and which therefore he can destroy at his will if he finds it unsuitable. Society is an indispensable necessity for man because without it he cannot exist or survive, much less grow and perfect himself. As Sri Aurobindo remarks, "Man does not actually live as an isolated being, nor can he grow by an isolated freedom. He grows by his relations with others and his freedom must exercise itself in a progressive self-harmonising with the freedom of his fellow-beings. The social principle therefore, apart from the forms it has taken, would be perfectly justified, if by nothing else, then by the need of society as a field of relations which afford to the individual his occasion for growing towards a greater perfection."[2]

We may, therefore, conclude that all individualistic theories, like the social contract theory as expressed by some thinkers or the Anarchist theory, which condemn society as a thing evil in itself or question its necessity for the existence and development of man are altogether wrong. Man's dependence on society is not a temporary or a dispensable factor; it is the very condition of his existence and survival and a constant need of his growth and perfection. It is in this sense that Aristotle considered man to be a social animal. However much we may object to undesirable forms of social life, we cannot deny our need of society itself; our quarrel with oppressive types of social orders should not blind us to the fact of our fundamental dependence on society.

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[1] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, pp. 16-17.
[2] *The Human Cycle*, p. 269.

This is, however, only one side of the question. For if the individual is so dependent on society, society is no less dependent on the individual. As Sri Aurobindo maintains, "The community exists by the individual, for its mind and life and body are constituted by the mind and life and body of its composing individuals; if that were abolished or disaggregated, its own existence would be abolished or disaggregated, though some spirit or power of it might form again in other individuals."[1] Further, the society or the community depends on the individual for its inner progress and evolution. It is only through the progress of the individual that society can achieve its own inner progress. "Only as the individuals become more and more conscious can the group-being also become more and more conscious; the growth of the individual is the indispensable means for the inner growth as distinguished from the outer force and expansion of the collective being."[2] This is because "In the mass the collective consciousness is near to the Inconscient; it has a subconscious, an obscure and mute movement which needs the individual to express it, to bring it to light, to organise it and make it effective. The mass consciousness by itself moves by a vague, half-formed or unformed subliminal and commonly subconscient impulse rising to the surface; it is prone to a blind or half-seeing unanimity which suppresses the individual in the common movement : if it thinks, it is by the motto, the slogan, the watchword, the common crude or formed idea, the traditional, the accepted customary notion; it acts, when not by instinct or on impulse, then by the rule of the pack, the herd mentality, the type law. This mass consciousness, life, action can be extraordinarily effective if it can find an individual or a few powerful individuals to embody, express, lead, organise it; its sudden crowd-movements can also be irresistible for the moment like the motion of an avalanche or the rush of a tempest. The suppression or entire subordination of the individual in the mass consciousness can give a great practical efficiency to a nation or a community if the subliminal collective being can build a binding tradition or find a group, a class, a head to embody its spirit and direction; the strength of powerful military states, of communities with a tense and austere culture rigidly imposed on its individuals, the success of the great world-conquerors, had behind it this secret of Nature. But this is an efficiency of the outer life, and that life is not the highest or last term of our being. There is a mind in us, there is a soul and spirit, and our life has no true value if it has not in it a growing consciousness, a developing mind, and if life and mind are not an expression, an instrument, a means of liberation and fulfilment for the soul, the indwelling Spirit.

"But the progress of the mind, the growth of the soul, even of the mind and soul of the collectivity, depends on the individual, on his sufficient freedom and independence, on his separate power to express and bring into being what is still

[1] *The Life Divine* (American edition), p. 929.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 617.

unexpressed in the mass, still undeveloped from the subconscience or not yet brought out from within or brought down from the Superconscience. The collectivity is a mass, a field of formation; the individual is the diviner of truth, the form-maker, the creator. In the crowd the individual loses his inner direction and becomes a cell of the mass body moved by the collective will or idea or the mass impulse. He has to stand apart, affirm his separate reality in the whole, his own mind emerging from the common mentality, his own life distinguishing itself in the common life-uniformity, even as his body has developed something unique and recognisable in the common physicality. He has, even, in the end to retire into himself in order to find himself, and it is only when he has found himself that he can become spiritually one with all; if he tries to achieve that oneness in the mind, in the vital, in the physical and has not yet a sufficiently strong individuality, he may be overpowered by the mass consciousness and lose his soul fulfilment, his mind fulfilment, his life fulfilment, become only a cell of the mass body. The collective being may then become strong and dominant, but it is likely to lose its plasticity, its evolutionary movement: the great evolutionary periods of humanity have taken place in communities where the individual became active, mentally, vitally or spiritually alive."[1]

We have, therefore, to conclude that the dependence of society on the individual is as deep and fundamental as the individual's dependence on society. As the individual depends on society for his survival, growth and perfection, so too the society depends on the individual for its embodied existence, self-expression and inner develolpment. The relation between the individual and society is, thus, not that of a one-sided dependence as the contract theory and other individualistic theories erroneously assume but of mutual interdependence. These two are not separate and opposite entities but inseparable and interdependent powers of the one common existence.

(2)

The Organic Theory of Society

Opposed to the social contract theory asserting the importance of the individual in relation to society, there is the organic theory of society stressing the importance of society in relation to the individual. This organic theory with its collectivistic emphasis at one extreme is as one-sided and misleading as the contract theory with its individualistic emphasis at the other extreme.

This theory is as old as the contract theory and has been very widely held in ancient as well as modern times. The great progress of biology in the second half of the nineteenth century gave a strong impetus to its development. Its

[1] *The Life Divine*, pp. 618-19.

influence on contemporary social thought, however, is not so marked and it is only a very modified form of it that now finds acceptance in current sociological writings.

Like the contract theory, this theory also has been expressed in different forms by several thinkers. In its general form it considers society as a biological organism similar in its structure and functions to an individual organism and subject to similar laws of growth, maturation and decay. Society, in this view, is only a larger biological system having the same kind of unity of its parts and integration of its processes as the human or animal body. It therefore maintains that the science of sociology must be based on biology and must be governed by essentially the same principles. Different exponents of this view like H. Spencer, Bluntchli, Lilienfeld, Schäffle and Novicov have developed various interpretations of society, state and social phenomena according to the type of the organic theory put forward by them. Some of these thinkers have given an extreme form to this theory by identifying specific structures of society with the organs and systems of the human body. H. Spencer, for example, elaborates in considerable detail the similarities in functions, systems and processes between the social and biological organisms. Other writers find in society counterparts of the brains, the lungs and other organs and limbs of the body. Bluntchli goes to the extent of attributing sexual characteristics to the State and the church. The former is, according to him, masculine, while the latter is feminine. The State being masculine, women, in his opinion, should not be given franchise. Some thinkers like Oswald Spengler hold the view that society passes through the same organic cycle of birth, youth, maturity, old age and death as other organisms.

The organic theory has also been expressed in a psychological form according to which society is considered to be not so much a greater organic body as a larger inclusive mind—a "social mind" or a "group mind". It is also sometimes conceived as a distinct psychological entity or a spiritual person, as real as the individual person. A number of ancient and modern thinkers like Plato, Hegel, B. Kidd, Bosanquet and W. McDougall have put forward such psychological theories. Many of the recent scientific-minded sociologists, however, do not much favour such psychological interpretations of society.

The organic theory of society in one form or another has been utilised by various types of collectivistic ideologies to support their doctrines and to justify their policies for the subordination of the individual to the society, mostly as represented by the State. Basing themselves on the organic view, they have maintained that the individual is merely a cell of the social body meant only to serve the social aims and so can have no claim to any liberty for personal self-fulfilment. Dictators like Mussolini and Hitler have found philosophical justification for their totalitarian state policies in the collectivistic doctrines of Hegel and other similar thinkers. This collectivistic state idea aiming at the entire suppression of the liberties of the individual for the efficient growth and power

of the State has received a tremendous impetus in recent times and is threatening to destroy the opposite individualistic idea which had been steadily gaining strength under the influence of the liberalistic doctrines of the nineteenth century.

These, in brief outline, are the main ideas of the organic theory of society as expressed by several Western philosophers over many centuries. We have now to consider the important question as to how far Sri Aurobindo's view of society corresponds to this theory.

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While explaining Sri Aurobindo's view of the nature of society in the previous article, we have already shown that there is, according to him, a close parallel between the nature of the individual being and the nature of society. The society or community "even in its greater complexity" is "a larger, a composite individual, the collective Man."[1] Like the individual, it "has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist."[2] The society, thus, is "an organic living being with a collective or rather...a common or communal soul, mind and body."[3]

Sri Aurobindo maintains that this parallel between the individual and the social being is so close that it amounts to "a real identity of nature."[4] He reveals this identity in the constitution, formation, growth and evolution of the individual human organism and the social organism. As the physical body of the individual man is a living organic whole composed of cells, so the physical body of the society is a living organic whole composed of its individual members. Also, the process by which larger and more complex social groups develop from the earlier smaller and simpler ones is similar to the process by which larger and more complex biological organisms grow from the initial simpler and rudimentary ones. Further, in their evolutionary course both the individual and social organisms trace the same organic cycle of birth, growth and decay with a possibility of renewal under certain conditions. As he says : "The life of the society like the physical life of the individual human being passes through a cycle of birth, growth, youth, ripeness and decline, and if this last stage goes far enough without any arrest of its course towards decadence, it may perish...as a man dies of old age. But the collective being has too the capacity of renewing itself, of a recovery and a new cycle."[5]

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[1] *The Human Cycle*, p. 86.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
[3] *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 378.
[4] *The Human Cycle*, p. 40.
[5] *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 378.

It needs, however, to be made clear that though Sri Aurobindo shows so close an identity between the individual and the social being, yet it is not, in his view, a complete identity, for he also points out very significant differences between them. The most important difference is that the constituents of the physical organism of the society are self-conscious mental individuals, while those of the individual organism are subconscious biological cells. For this reason, the physical being of society seems at first "more crude, primitive and artificial in the forms it takes; for it has a more difficult task before it, it needs a longer time to find itself, it is more fluid and less easily organic."[1] (Herbert Spencer has pointed out the same difference by stating that an individual organism is a symmetrical and concrete aggregate, while the social organism is an asymmetrical and discrete one, and that in the former the consciousness is centralised in the nervous system, while in the latter it is diffused throughout the whole aggregate, so that each part of society retains its own consciousness and there is no special "social sensorium" for the whole.)

As the constituents of the social body have self-conscious individuality, Sri Aurobindo considers it to be more a subjective power than an objective existence. As he puts it: "even the physical being of the society is a subjective power, not a mere objective existence. Much more is it in its inner self a great corporate soul with all the possibilities and dangers of the soul-life."[2]

Since it is this inner soul of the society that is, to Sri Aurobindo, its essential self, the organic unity which he ascribes to society is a characteristic only of its external nature. It is this external nature of society, made up of its mind, life and body, that has an organic structure, and not its soul which is its essential self; for the soul is a spiritual Being and not a structure of Nature—it is neither a natural organism nor an artificial mechanism. As Sri Aurobindo remarks: "One may see even that, like the individual, it essentially is a soul rather than has one; it is a group-soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctness, must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life."[3]

From this it is quite apparent that Sri Aurobindo's view of society is essentially a spiritual view and not a biological one, even though he admits a close identity of nature between the biological organism and the society. For the extremely significant differences that he points out between them make it quite obvious that the identity of their nature, however close, is not complete or absolute.

It is equally obvious that Sri Aurobindo's view of society is also fundamentally not a psychological view in the superficial sense, like the views of those Western

[1] *The Human Cycle*, p. 40.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

philosophers who put forward the organic theory in a psychological form. For the essential reality of society, according to him, is not its psychological structure created by the psychological interrelations and interactions of its members, nor is it some vague mental or spiritual entity as some Western thinkers believe; it is a spiritual Being as different from its psychological structure as from its physical or biological body. Sri Aurobindo admits that the society, like the individual, has a psychological organism as well as a physical body; but he also points out that, as the essential reality of the individual is his soul, which is other than his mind as it is other than his body, so also the essential reality of society is its soul which is other than its collective mind as it is other than its collective body. Thus, his conception of the fundamental nature of society is distinctly a spiritual conception. This needs to be specifically stated because Sri Aurobindo himself speaks of his own view of society as a psychological or a subjective view. But this he does to contrast his standpoint with that of those other thinkers who hold a materialistic objective view by taking into consideration only the external factors of society and treating them as the sole determinants of all social phenomena. As against this, Sri Aurobindo maintains that the real determinant of social phenomena is the consciousness of society, which at its deepest is its soul-consciousness. It is this essential soul-consciousness that really governs both its surface psychological movements as well as its external physical and material phenomena. This makes it very clear that Sri Aurobindo uses the terms "psychological" and "subjective" with a much wider and deeper significance than the Western thinkers do. In his system of thought these terms are inclusive of all the layers of consciousness including the deepest and the highest spiritual ones, which the Western thinkers do not always admit or, even when admitting, conceive them in a much more narrow and limited manner than Sri Aurobindo. For, there is a vast gulf between what Sri Aurobindo means by the term "spiritual" and what the Western philosophers or psychologists mean by it. The same gulf exists between his "psychological" theory of society and the psychological theories put forward by the Western thinkers.

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From the above comparison of Sri Aurobindo's view of society with the organic theories of the Western social thinkers it is apparent that his conception of the individual's relation to society is radically different from the conception of these thinkers based upon their organic theories. Sri Aurobindo does not conceive this relation to be merely that of the part to the whole as the exponents of the organic theory do. In his view it is a very complex and many-sided relation which cannot be expressed in a single formula of a uniform character. This is because both the individual and the society are beings with a very complex nature composed of several parts, and the relation they have in one part is not the same

as in other parts. In fact, their relations in their various parts are not only different but even so opposite as to seem logically contradictory to the rational mind. Thus the individual in his surface nature is obviously a part of the social whole, contained in it and dependent on it for his existence and development; yet in his inner being, which is his true self, he is not only capable of independent self-existence but even of a universal self-enlargement in which he can contain within himself not only the whole society but even the whole humanity. As Sri Aurobindo remarks: "these social units or aggregates are not like the human body in which the component cells are capable of no separate life apart from the aggregate. The human individual tends to exist in himself and to exceed the limits of the family, the clan, the class, the nation; and even, that self-sufficiency on one side, that universality on the other are the essential elements of his perfection."[1] This capacity for universalising himself which the individual possesses in his true inner being can make his inner relation with the society, as also with the whole humanity, altogether different from the relation he has with them in his normal surface nature. For if it is true of his normal external self that it is a small portion of the society and a still smaller portion of the humanity, it is equally true that in his inner and universal self he is capable of becoming infinitely greater than the society and even the humanity. For, as Sri Aurobindo says: "the universal is not any group or extended ego, not the family, community, nation or even all mankind, but an infinite far surpassing all these littlenesses."[2] And this universalisation is not the limit of the individual's inner self-enlargement; for he is capable of exceeding even the universal consciousness and identifying himself with the Supreme Transcendent. Since the individual is capable of all these realisations in his inner being, it is impossible to reduce all his relations with society into a single uniform formula. To say that the individual is merely a cell of the social body and nothing more, as some of the Western thinkers who hold the organic view of society do, is an excessive simplification of the complex and many-sided relation of the individual and society in different parts of their being. Illogical though it may seem to the rational mind, we have to admit all the seemingly contradictory aspects of their relation in our total view and integrate them in a comprehensive vision. If we confine ourselves to an extremely narrow and limited view based upon the relations existing in their external being only, we are sure to be misguided by the superficiality of our vision. The great importance of Sri Aurobindo's theory of society consists in this that it reveals to us the integral truth of the relation of the individual and society based upon a comprehensive vision of all its aspects in their total being.

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[1] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, pp. 12-13.
[2] *Ideals and Progress*, p. 21.

Since in Sri Aurobindo's idea, the individual, though organically related to society, is not merely a cell or a portion of the social whole, but an independent being in himself, any collectivistic ideology aiming at merging his personality in the communal being or attempting to suppress his freedom by excessive control and State regimentation finds no support in his view. In fact, his emphasis on the importance of the individual's freedom is so great that, though he admits the temporary necessity of regulating that freedom so long as man is ruled by his infrarational impulses, yet he strongly advocates the largest amount of liberty for the individual's growth and development, not only in the interest of the individual himself but of the society as well, because, in his view, it is only through the progress of the individual that society itself can progress. It is for this reason that he has repeatedly expressed great concern in his writings at the swift growth in modern times of the collectivistic State idea which according to him, "has after a long interval fully reasserted itself and is dominating the thought and action of the world" and "is rushing towards possession with a great motor force and is prepared to crush under its wheels everything that conflicts with its force or asserts the right of other human tendencies."[1] This attempt of the State to suppress the individual entirely in the interest of the collectivity is a dangerous falsehood because, as he trenchantly puts it, "the individual is not merely a social unit; his existence, his right and claim to live and grow are not founded solely on his social work and function. He is not merely a member of a human pack, hive or ant-hill; he is something in himself, a soul, a being, who has to fulfil his own individual truth and law as well as his natural or his assigned part in the truth and law of the collective existence. He demands freedom, space, initiative for his soul, for his nature, for that puissant and tremendous thing which society so much distrusts and has laboured in the past either to suppress altogether or to relegate to the purely spiritual field, an individual thought, will and conscience. If he is to merge these eventually, it cannot be into the dominating thought, will and conscience of others, but into something beyond into which he and all must be both allowed and helped freely to grow."[2] He asserts the same truth with a greater force when he says : "the group self has no right to regard the individual as if he were only a cell of its body, a stone of its edifice, a passive instrument of its collective life and growth. Humanity is not so constituted. We miss the divine reality in man and the secret of the human birth if we do not see that each individual man is that Self and sums up all human potentiality in his own being. That potentiality he has to find, develop, work out from within. No State or legislator or reformer can cut him rigorously into a perfect pattern; no Church or priest can give him a mechanical salvation; no order, no class life or ideal, no nation, no civilisation or creed or ethical, social or religious Shastra can be allowed to say

[1] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, pp. 19-20.
[2] *The Human Cycle*, pp. 26-27.

to him permanently, 'In this way of mine and thus far shalt thou act and in no other way and no farther shall thy growth be permitted.' These things may help him temporarily or they may curb and he grows in proportion as he can use them and then exceed them, train and teach his individuality by them, but assert it always in the end in its divine freedom. Always he is the traveller of the cycles and his road is forward."[1]

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As the society has no right to suppress the individual in its own interest, so also the individual, in Sri Aurobindo's view, has no right to disregard the legitimate claims of society upon him in order to seek his selfish aims. This is a necessity not only for the good of the society but for the individual's own good for, according to Sri Aurobindo, there is an inherent solidarity between their nature, and in a right relationship between them there need be no conflict between their interests. As he says, the individual "is not only himself, but is in solidarity with all of his kind,—let us leave aside for the moment that which seems to be not of his kind. That which we are has expressed itself through the individual, but also through the universality, and though each has to fulfil itself in its own way, neither can succeed independently of the other. The society has no right to crush or efface the individual for its own better development or self-satisfaction; the individual, so long at least as he chooses to live in the world, has no right to disregard for the sake of his own solitary satisfacion and development his fellow-beings and to live at war with them or seek a selfishly isolated good. And when we say, no right, it is from no social, moral or religious standpoint, but from the most positive and simply with a view to the law of existence itself. For neither the society nor the individual can so develop to their fulfilment. Every time the society crushes or effaces the individual, it is inflicting a wound on itself and depriving its own life of priceless sources of stimulation and growth. The individual too cannot flourish by himself; for the universal, the unity and collectivity of his fellow-beings, is his present source and stock; it is the thing whose possibilities he individually expresses, even when he transcends its immediate level, and of which in his phenomenal being he is one result. Its depression strikes eventually at his own sources of life, by its increasing he also increases."[2]

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We may conclude this statement of Sri Aurobindo's view of the true relation of the individual and society by quoting the following passage in which he has

[1] *The Human Cycle*, pp. 79-80.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

expressed it very succinctly: "we may enlarge the idea of the self and, as objective Science sees a universal force of Nature which is the one reality and of which everything is the process, we may come subjectively to the realisation of a universal Being or Existence which fulfils itself in the world and the individual and the group with an impartial regard for all as equal powers of its self-manifestation. This is obviously the self-knowledge which is most likely to be right, since it most comprehensively embraces and accounts for the various aspects of the world-process and the eternal tendencies of humanity. In this view neither the separate growth of the individual nor the all-absorbing growth of the group can be the ideal, but an equal, simultaneous and, as far as may be, parallel development of both, in which each helps to fulfil the other. Each being has his own truth of independent self-realisation and his truth of self-realisation in the life of others and should feel, desire, help, participate more and more, as he grows in largeness and power, in the harmonious and natural growth of all the individual selves and all the collective selves of the one universal Being. These two, when properly viewed, would not be separate, opposite or really conflicting lines of tendency, but the same impulse of the one common existence, companion movements separating only to return upon each other in a richer and larger unity and mutual consequence."[1]

KISHOR GANDHI

[1] *The Human Cycle*, p. 71.

Human Destiny

ANTHROPOLOGISTS[1] speak of a very interesting, if not strange biological phenomenon. A baby monkey's face, it seems, is much nearer to the adult human face than to its own form when adult and grown up. Also the characteristic accentuations that mark out the grown up ape come in its case too soon, but the human being continues, generally and on the whole, the stamp of his early, i.e. immature animality throughout his life. The rough and bold blotches, the rude and crude structures that make up the adult simian face, meaning all the specialisation of its character are not inherited by man; man retains always something of the fragility and effeminacy of the child. Reference is made to the forecranium proportion, delicate jaws corresponding smaller teeth, shortened cranial base, expanding brain, bulging forehead, face retracted neatly beneath the brow which are characteristics of the simian baby. There is a lack of a certain forceful hard masculinity that becomes so dominant in the ultimate phase.

This phenomenon is akin and may be linked to the other one also pointed out by anthropologists. A new species, it is said, grows not out of a mature, fully developed, that is to say, specialised type but out of an earlier, somewhat immature, undeveloped, non-specialised type. The new shoot of the genealogical tree branches out not from the topmost, the latest stem, but from one just below it, an earlier stock. The latest means the most developed, that is to say, the most specialised, and that means fossilised—barren; nothing new can be produced out of that; it can repeat only what was before so long as it does not die out and perish.

The aboriginal types that have survived today are, it has also been pointed out, a growth towards decline and deterioration, owing to a stereotyped functioning and a consequent coarsening and hardening of traits, both psychological and physical, a loss of plasticity, loss of the "early innocence".

The continuance and maintenance of an innocent baby animality in man shown in his physical features has been termed reversion to type or foetalisation. Some declare that for man at least it is a sign of weakness, a possible incapacity to face squarely the blows of life and nature. This is due to culture and refinement that makes one sensitive but weak. There have been races in the past that attained cultural effeminacy—the Egyptians for example—and could not last, last long enough to withstand the impact of less cultured, less refined, but more vigorous races. The Graeco-Roman succeeded the Egyptian, but they too in their turn were overwhelmed by the onslaught of ruder races, the Nordic barba-

[1] *See The Immense Journey* by Loren Eiseley.

rians and gave way and perished. And once more, in the modern age, do we not see the repetition of a similar drama ? The more cultured, the more refined, the older races seem to have paid heavily for their culture and refinement by being more and more delicate and weak and thus being slowly pushed to the wall by newer races built with heavier and coarser grain.

But that perhaps is not the real truth of the matter. It may be considered in a somewhat different perspective. We say cultures, races, species die not because they become too refined, delicate, effeminate, but rather because they develop on a single track; they become lop-sided, specialised, rigid, fossilised, as we have already said. Circumstances change, the environment brings up new conditions and if the previous form continues in its groove and does not know how to react adequately to the demand, is petrified and unchanging, then it breaks and is thrown away as a thing of the dead past.

A certain plasticity, a good deal of it, a little less finality with regard to structure and function, youthfulness, in one word, is the basic condition of life and life's progress. Hence even an immaturity, a certain slowness in pubescence, a longer adolescence signifies a more enduring plasticity, that is to say, the capacity for change and progress. A quick leap into old age and fixity, as is the rule with the lower animals, means arrest of all growth and sooner or later decay and dissolution. Even if such a life-form continues to exist, the existence is only death in life; a fossil exists for millions of years : it is not a significant existence.

If man has maintained a longer and greater youthfulness than his animal forbears, it means he has greater possibilities and through longer vistas of time. But leaving aside the animal creation, if we consider man himself and his prospect, certain conclusions forcibly present themselves which we shall try to clarify.

On a comparatively shorter view of the human evolution we observe as, for example, Spengler has shown, a serial or serials of the rise and fall of races and nations and cultures. Is that a mere repetition, more or less of the same or very similar facts of life, or is there a running thread that points to a growth, at least a movement towards some goal or purpose to attain and fulfil ? The present cycle of humanity, which we may call and is usually called the historic age, dates from the early Egyptians and, in India, from the ancestral Vedic sages (*pūrve pitaraḥ*). On a longer outlook, what has been the nature of man's curve of life since then to the present day ? Races and cultures have risen and have perished, but they have been pursuing one line, moving towards one direction—the growth of *homo fabricus*—the term coined by Nietzsche—Man the artisan. Man has become man through the discovery and use of tools—from tools of stone to tools of iron, that marks his growth from primitiveness to civilisation. And the degree of civilisation, the distance he has travelled from his origins is measured precisely by the development of his tools in respect of precision, variety, efficiency, serviceability. Viewed from that standpoint the modern man has travelled indeed very far and has civilised

himself consummately. For the tools have become the whole man; man has lost his human element and almost become a machine. A machine cannot run indefinitely, it has got to stop when life is not there. So it is often prognosticated now that man is at the end of his career. He is soon going to be a thing of the past, an extinct race—like one of the prehistoric species that died out because they could not change with the circumstances of life, because they became unchanging, hard and brittle, so to say, and fell to pieces, or otherwise they continued to exist but in a degraded, a mere vegetative form.

But, as we have said, man seems to have yet retained his youthfulness. He always just falls short of the perfect perfection, that is to say, in any single form or expression of life. Life did become stereotyped, mechanised and therefore fossilised, more or less, in Egypt of the later Dynasties; in India too life did not become less inert and vegetative during two long periods, once just preceding the advent of the Buddha, and a second time just preceding the Moslem advent—and a third time perhaps just preceding the British advent. And yet man has survived all falls and has been reborn and rejuvenated every time he seemed to be off the stage.

The very lack of perfection and fixity in the human consciousness leaves a kind of plasticity in his nature and therefore an opening towards further life and progress. However perfect man's sten-gun is, it is not as sure and efficient as the bee's sting. Man outlives, because he progresses, through apparent regressions. The cycles of human life upon earth are not mere repetitions of the same pattern as some have supposed, they indicate a growth and development. We have referred to the growth and development in the matter of tools, but that is only a sign and expression of another growth and development—development in mind and consciousness. In the earlier races of mankind there was a vital, a kind of instinctive and intuitive—Bergsonian—light of consciousness; that slowly has grown into a rich intellectual consciousness, and significantly and characteristically, into a more and more self-conscious consciousness. That points to man's characteristic progressive march through all the changes in his life-pattern.

The danger in the growth and progress of the consciousness is that it progresses along a definite line or lines, cuts out a groove and in the end lands into a blind alley or *cul-de-sac*. This, as I have said, is perhaps the original or secret cause of decline and fall of many individual races and nations. But on the whole mankind steps back, it seems, just at the danger-point and escapes the final catastrophe. A new vein of consciousness awakes in man and gives him a new power of self-adjustment. From Imperial Egypt to, say, modern France or Russia it is a far cry; the two ends give very different connotations of the human consciousness, although there are many things common in certain life-instincts and some broad mental impulsions. And there is not only progress, that is to say, advancement on the same plane, but there is a kind of ascension on a somewhat different plane.

Yajnavalkya represented a type of *élite* which is far away and far other than that of Vivekananda, for example, today.

We have described man, especially, modern man as *homo fabricus*; but that is a particular aspect of application of *homo intellectualis*. And it is sign and warning that he must step back and look for a new connotation of his consciousness in order to go forward and continue to exist. If, as we have said in the beginning, man is capable of a durable youthfulness, by his very nature, it means he has a resiliency that will enable him to leap into new conditions and adapt himself to them more easily and without much delay.

Mankind has to enter and is entering into new conditions of life, it has to adopt a new mode of living; and for that a new mode of consciousness is imperative and imminent.

Human history has shown that man is capable of facing catastrophic changes and himself undergoing such changes. At this critical turn of human history where we stand today, man has to choose his destiny—either the Capitol or the Tarpeian Rock, as is in the classical phrase. Either he becomes a new man with a new consciousness or he goes down into inconscience and is no more man.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

Reality and Illusion: The Problem of Phenomenal Existence In Indian Philosophy

A great Illusion then has built the stars.
But where then is the soul's security,
Its poise in this circling of unreal suns ?
... ...
Or where begins and ends Illusion's reign ?
Perhaps the soul we feel is only a dream,
Eternal self a fiction sensed in trance.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* : Book VI, Canto II.)

IN Indian philosophy the question of the authenticity, the reality or unreality, of phenomenal existence—of the cosmos and man as experiencing individual in the cosmos—has been considered classically in terms of the doctrine of Maya, the primordial creative energy which, in one manner or another, is instrumentally responsible for the world which we daily experience. Upon the status of Maya as identical with or detached from Ultimate Reality has depended in the various philosophical traditions the relative reality or unreality of the world.

The concept of Maya is, as Eliade has asserted, one of four basic and interdependent concepts or 'kinetic ideas' of Indian spirituality, the other three being karma, nirvana and yoga.[1] Without a doubt the concept of Maya as that mysterious power which brings the cosmos into existence and maintains it either as illusion or reality is an ancient one. Already in the Vedas there is anticipated the later Upanishadic and Advaitic doctrine of Maya as the principle of illusion governing the existence of gods and men.[2] As Deussen points out, according to the definitions of the later hymns of the *Rig-veda* existence is unitary, is one.[3] Such a view "involves, if only in germ and half unconsciously, the knowledge that all plurality—consequently all proximity in space, all succession in time, all inter-

[1] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga* : *Immortality and Freedom*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1958, p. 3.

[2] *Atharva-veda*, 10:8:34— "Where Gods and men rest like spokes in the nave—I ask you of the Flower (i.e. the quintessence) of the Waters, (of the place) where it is deposited with maya." Also in the *Rig-veda* (6:47:18) the term maya is found when it is said that Indra assumes many shapes through his illusions (maya).

[3] Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, trans. by A.S. Geden, 1919, pp. 228f.

dependence of cause and effect, all contrast of subject and object—has no reality in the highest sense."[1] Existence is one; all plurality is merely a matter of words : "the poets give many names to that which is only one."[2] Only the self, the purusha truly *is*[3]; unity alone is *real*.[4]

In the *Upanishads* this monistic idealism is expanded in the discourses of Yajnavalkya in the *Brihadaranyaka* : Reality is one and to believe that It is plural is to be bound to death.[5] This view leads to the later declaration of the *Svetasvatara* (in opposing the realistic spirit of Samkhya) that all of prakriti itself is but maya (illusion) and the Great Lord (mahesvara) is the illusion-maker (mayavin).[6]

In the *Bhagavad Gita* Maya is not equated with either material existence, with prakriti, or with avidya, ignorance. It is the divine power of Self-disclosure, the divine mystery of the transformation or 'birth' of the Unborn, the Infinite, in a finite form as an avatar : 'Though I am the unborn, though I am imperishable in my self-existence, though I am the Lord of all existences, yet I stand upon my own Nature and I come into birth by my self-Maya.'[7] It is the veiled manifestation of the Supreme Being through the medium of prakriti and the gunas. The Infinite presents Itself in the forms of prakriti but is misapprehended because of the workings of the modes of nature (the gunas) which create a false view of reality. This too is Maya, the divine power of cosmic illusion whereby the Supreme Lord veils his real being.[8]

It is with the work of Shankara, however, that the concept of Maya assumes a full-fledged philosophical importance. Indeed, it may be said that because of his distinctive interpretation and use of the concept of Maya, Shankara fairly determined the course of Indian philosophy from the Eighth Century to the present day.[9] It is the purpose of the present discussion to set forth, systematically and

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 229. For a complete discussion of the Rig-vedic view of the unitariness of Reality see Deussen's *Einleitung uber Philosophie der Veda*, pp. 103-127.

[2] *Rig-veda*, 1:164:46. See also *Chandogya Upanishad* 6:1:3-6.

[3] *Rig-veda*, 10:90:2.

[4] *Ibid.*, 10:192:2.

[5] *Brihadaranyaka*, 4:4:19.

[6] *Svetasvatara*, 4:10.

[7] *Bhagavad Gita*, 4:6:7 ; translated by Sri Aurobindo : *The Gita*, edited by A. Roy, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1946.

[8] *Bhagavad Gita* 7:14. *Ibid.*, see commentary, p. 110.

[9] As Murti in his *Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (Allen and Unwin, London 1955) has pointed out, not a great deal is known of pre-Shankarite (Gaudapada) Vedanta since there is no extant exegetical literature of the older Vedanta. However, from references to and citations from the commentaries of earlier writers found in the works of Shankara and non-advaitic Vedantins, especially Ramanuja, it may be seen that in the pre-Shankara Vedanta the world and the individual are conceived as real parts (amsa), transformations of Brahman. "The notion of appearance (adhyasa) does not seem to have been understood or appreciated." (p. 110) Moreover, Shankara's philosophy represented a 'revolution' in Vedanta, an abrupt departure from monism (ekatvavada) to absolutism (advaita)—"the conscious rejection of duality and difference as illusory." (p. 111).

analytically, Shankara's doctrine of Maya as it is expounded in his *Bhashya* on the *Brahma Sutras*; then to consider in the light of our presentation of Shankara two significant modern interpretations—those of K. C. Bhattacharya and S. Radhakrishnan—of the advaitic meaning of Maya; and finally to present both Sri Aurobindo's critique of Shankara's teachings in respect to the illusoriness of phenomenal existence and his own doctrine of the 'Divine Maya'.

* *

According to Shankara the world and all of phenomenal existence is an illusion (*maya*), unreal (*mithya*). What is perceived as a real world, peopled by real individuals, is but a product of nescience (*avidya*) or false cognition (*mithya-jnana-vijimbhita*). Only Brahman *is*; apart from Brahman there is no *real* existence. From the standpoint of Ultimate Reality the world of names and forms (*namarupa-prapanca*), all empirical phenomena (*rupabheda*) is superimposed (*adhyasa*) upon Reality (*sat*) and this superimposition is unreal. When the individual soul achieves a complete cognition of Reality, then the illusion of phenomenal existence will cease, just as would the illusion that a rope is a snake or that a post, seen in the twilight, is a man.

Shankara's assertion that phenomenal existence is nothing but illusion is founded more upon normative (i.e. 'theological') considerations than upon purely epistemological analysis. That is to say, Shankara accepted in the orthodox fashion of the day the declaration of Shruti that Brahman is 'One without second' and made that article of belief the point of departure for all his consideration of the world and the individual.[1] Once Brahman is accepted as the sole Reality—unchanging, without parts, absolute Being-Consciousness-Bliss (Sachchidananda)—all that is impermanent and manifold, i.e. the world, is not Brahman, is unreal.[2] But in what way is it unreal? The world is an actual fact, a datum, of daily experience. How can it be unreal, an illusion?

[1] In saying that Shankara's teachings are based upon normative considerations, we do not wish to underestimate the 'existential' or 'experiential' aspect of his teachings. We do not suppose that his basic doctrines were simply acquired from sacred texts. He was, after all, a profoundly devout Saivite, a mystic, a tantric, whose intellectual expression concerning the nature of reality must have been the product of deep and intensely personal religious experience. Nonetheless, in so far as theological and metaphysical systematization is concerned, Shankara's own intuitions were given in the orthodox form of an exposition and defence of sruti. However, it is significant that he began his bhashya with a discussion of illusion and nescience (adhyasa-avidya) as a sort of necessary existential prolegomenon to the normative task of defining Brahman. As Murti wisely asserts: "We cannot define Brahman except as the reality of the world, or as what the world is mistaken for." ("The Two Definitions of Brahman in the Advaita", *Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya Memorial Volume*, Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner, 1958, p. 137.)

[2] In regard to the normative concerns of Advaita Vedanta, P.T. Raju remarks : "The world is regarded as mithya or illusion, as otherwise, the advaitan thought, the eternal perfection of the Absolute cannot be saved. If it is real and forms part of the Brahman, the Brahman must be undergoing the vicissitudes of the world." (*Idealistic Thought of India*, p. 98, Allen and Unwin, London. 1953.)

Shankara does not deny the empirical reality of the world. He very clearly separates himself from Buddhistic Idealism, Vijnanavada, when he emphatically states that the world *exists* external to individual consciousness; it is not a product of the imagination or a phantastic projection by the individual consciousness of an existence which in fact is not external to consciousness.[1] Indeed, the very fact that the world is experienced as an object of the senses is proof that it exists external to the individual. It cannot, therefore, be unreal like the horns of a hare or a sky flower which are the products of phantasy and are not properly experienced by the senses. Moreover, the very nature of consciousness itself proves the existence of external objects different from consciousness, for men are conscious of things or objects of perception and nobody is conscious of his perception merely.[2] Also the fact that the Buddhist Idealists say that the world which is according to them but an internal cognition of consciousness *appears* 'as something external' shows that the world must in fact exist 'as something external', otherwise such an expression of speech is itself meaningless.

Neither may it be correctly said that the perception of the world is like that of dreams and hallucinations. In the first place, says Shankara, there is a manifest difference between the dream state and the waking state; the experiences had in the former are contradicted by those had in the latter. The experience of the world had in the waking state is a real (i.e. sensory) perception and is different from that had in the dream state which is but a kind of memory.[3] In the second place, what, Shankara asks, is the proof of the existence of consciousness except experience ? This being so, then the *experience* of an *object* is proof of its existence. Finally, Shankara concludes, the entire position of the Vijnanavadins is untenable, for according to them the actual variety of mental ideas (pot, tree, cloth, etc.) is accountable by mental impressions (samskaras) left by preceding experiences; but how can there be mental impressions without the perception of external objects ? The acceptance of the Vijnanvada position (i.e. that the experienced world is but an aggregation of mental impressions contained within consciousness) involves immediately the rejection of the principle which is the foundation of such an idealistic world-view (i.e. that mental impressions are possible apart from the perception of external objects).[4] Otherwise we are driven to assume a beginningless series of mental impressions, a *regressus in infinitum*, which is not an acceptable solution.[5]

[1] *Bhashya*: *Brahma Sutras*, 2:2:28.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Brahma Sutras*, 2:2:29.

[4] *Ibid.*, 2:2:30

[5] With such a refutation of the Vijnanavadins by Shankara and a clear distinction made in the Bhashya between that position and his own it is curious that such a scholar as Surendranath Dasgupta should have drawn the conclusion, as he seems to have done, that Shankara was like

Here in his refutation of the Vijnanavada position Shankara firmly insists on the objective reality of the world, existing independently of the knowing act (vastu-tantra). It is not like a dream state; it is a real perception of external objects by the senses. Yet, for all of that, the world according to Shankara is naught but an illusion (mithya) perceived in, by and through nescience (avidya). How can this be so ?

Firstly it is necessary to understand what Shankara means by 'illusion'. He does not mean that the world is totally non-existent, like the horns of a hare, or that it is a dream state; such views he explicitly denies in his refutation of Vijnanavada. It is *there*, outside—that which is 'given' in sensory perception. Illusion does not mean imaginary existence, phantasy (pratibhasikasatta); for such 'seeming existence' is totally unreal (asat). The world as illusion is neither totally unreal (since it is experienced) nor is it absolutely real (since Brahman alone is real). Thus, the world existence is neither unreal nor real; it is inexpressible (anirvacaniya).[1] It is apprehended as 'out there', but it exists only for as long as ignorance of Ultimate Reality, Brahman, lasts. When Brahman is known as sole Reality, as final truth and true existence (paramarthikasatta), then the world as phenomenal or 'pragmatic' existence (vyavaharikasatta) ceases to have any reality. As the analogy has it, the world is like the snake which is seen when in actual fact there exists but a rope. When the rope is known as that which actually exists, then the snake which was experienced as existing 'out there' and which filled the viewer with fear (such as a snake consciously conjured up in the imagination could not do)—that *particular* snake is known not to be real in all three of the temporal modes : past, present and future. Its existence, in other words, was at *no time* actual, i.e. *real*; it was totally illusory. Such is the nature of the world in relation to Brahman.

From a purely phenomenal or empirical point of view the world exists eternally, but from a metaphysical point of view it is only an illusion, having in fact

his master, Gaudapada, a 'hidden Buddhist' (*History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp. 423, 429) and that "Shankara's philosophy is largely a compound of Vijnanavada and Sunyavada Buddhism with the Upanishadic notion of the permanence of self superadded" (p. 494) ! No doubt, as Murti has well pointed out (*Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, pp. 112f), the great revolution in Vedanta philosophy (i.e. the sudden turn from a monistic to an absolutistic doctrine) introduced by Gaudapada-Shankara was in part a borrowing, or at least a copying of already well-established Madhyamika-Vijnanavada dialectic and absolutism, but it was also due to the 'inner dynamism' of the Upanishadic tradition itself. Moreover, as T.M.P. Mahadevan has shown (*Gaudapada*, University of Madras, 1954, especially chapter IX), it is true that Gaudapada did use both the terminology and arguments of the Vijnanavadins in establishing the illusoriness of the world, but after doing away with an uncritical Realism by use of Vijnanavadin arguments, he in turn submitted Buddhist Idealism to destructive analysis. Mahadevan thus concludes that "the adoption of the arguments of Subjectivism as a procedural or methodological device does not mean that either Advaita or Absolutism is identical with Subjectivism." (p. 198).

[1] Lacombe has well summed up this 'inexpressible' quality of the world in his assertion that 'Maya est l'irrationnel' du système de Cankara." *L'Absolu selon le Vedanta*, Paris, 1937, p. 66 ; see also pp. 47f, 90f.

no absolute or final reality.[1] The formal demonstrations or proofs which Shankara offers for this latter position, i.e. the illusoriness of the world, are several. Firstly, there is the declaration of Sruti that Brahman is the sole reality, alone without a second. But the scriptures also declare that Brahman is the cause of the world.[2] If Brahman is the cause of the world, it must not only be the First Cause (otherwise Brahman would not be alone, without a second)[3] but the material cause as well (otherwise there would have to exist a primal matter alongside of Brahman, which is like the Samkhya position and contrary to Sruti and reasoning).[4] This being so, then Brahman as first and material cause must impart some of its qualities (such as existence and intelligence) to its effect, i.e. the world.[5] Moreover, the world, as effect, must be accepted as having existed in Brahman, its cause, even before its manifestation and is, thus, not absolutely non-existent, even before creation.[6]

Now, if the effect (the world) exists prior to its manifestation in the cause (Brahman), even though in an undifferentiated state[7], and if an effect can be experienced only so long as its cause persists[8], it may be concluded that (1) the existence of the world is dependent upon Brahman and (2) the world and Brahman are non-different, as is declared by Sruti and demonstrated by reason.[9] But how

[1] As has been clearly shown by Deussen (*Die Nachvedische Philosophie der Inder*, Leipzig, 1920, 'Das Vedantasystem', pp. 586-614), Shankara had in effect two systems, distinct but not unrelated. There was the 'higher' system formed by an esoteric teaching (para vidya) in theology and eschatology combined with a metaphysical point of view (paramartha-avastha) in cosmology and psychology. This metaphysical system centred around the principle of 'identity', i.e. the non-duality (advaita) of Brahman : there is only Brahman, totally identified with atman ; there is no creation or existence of the world, no manifoldness, no individuality and transmigration of souls. Then there was a system of popular religion for those who could not attain to the higher level of identity. This second system was a compound of a lower or exoteric teaching in theology and eschatology and an empirical point of view (vyavahara-avastha) in cosmology and psychology and taught the creation of the world by Brahman as Iswara and the transmigration of souls made individual by virtue of the *upadhis*. Shankara, however, does not himself always strictly observe the distinction between these two levels or viewpoints, especially in his cosmology and psychology. As Deussen states : "Zum Nachteile der Klarheit und Konsequenz wird diese Zweiheit der standpunkte in Kosmologie und Psychologie nicht überall streng gewahrt. Das System stellt sich in allgemeinen auf den metaphysischen Standpunkt and vernachlässigt den empirischen, ohne doch demselben seine relative Berechtigung abzusprechen und absprechen zu können, weil er für die *apara vidya* der Eschatologie die unentbehrliche Voraussetzung ist." (pp. 593-594).

[2] *Brahma Sutras*, 1:1:2.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1:4:15-16.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1:4:23, 2:2:37.

[5] *Ibid.*, 2:1:6.

[6] *Ibid.*, 2:1:7.

[7] *Ibid.*, 2:1:17.

[8] *Ibid.*, 2:1:15.

[9] *Ibid.*, 2:1:18-20. Particular effects can be produced only by their proper causes and must pre-exist in their causes ; a cause can produce only that which was pre-existent in itself as non-different from itself ; it can never produce altogether a new thing which was not already existing in it and an absolutely non-existent like the horns of a hare can never come into existence.

is the effect (the world) which exists before its manifestation in its cause (Brahman), though in an undifferentiated state, manifested out of the cause ? Is not an agent needed to manifest the effect from its cause, just as the production of a clay jar from clay requires a potter, and furthermore wouldn't such an agent need aids for the production of the effect, just as the potter needs a wheel ? The only answer, according to Shankara, to these and similar questions regarding the manifestation of the world is simply that Brahman is the sole reality, one without a second : there can be no agent other than Brahman; no material other than Brahman and no force or instrument external to Brahman. The world is eternally contained in Brahman as effect in cause and is manifested out of Brahman by Brahman as curds out of milk: as milk becomes curd, so Brahman 'becomes' the world[1]—not by any extraneous means, but by its own infinite power.[2]

But such a solution raises a greater problem. If Brahman somehow transforms itself into the world, then either the whole of Brahman is changed into the world or else only part of Brahman is so modified. If the first be true—that the whole of Brahman is transformed—then there will be no Brahman left after the creation of the world, but only the world itself as Its effect. If the second possibility be true—that only a part of Brahman becomes the world —then it must be admitted that Brahman is made up of parts. Either possibility leads us to a dilemma; for there are scriptural texts both denying and supporting each of these apparently contradictory views[3] and the acceptance of either one would mean the attributing of reality, of Being (sat) to the world existence. To this critical point Shankara has in his skillful dialectic brought the discussion, and it is here that he can now resolve the crisis and in so doing, obliterate the positions of his opponents. The only answer, says Shankara, is that the modification of Brahman into the world, the manifestation of the world out of Brahman, is merely an apparent modification (vivarta) and not a real one (parinama).[4] Brahman remains eternally immutable, without parts; this world of manifoldness and becoming springs from Brahman through Its inscrutable power of Maya[5] with which It is endowed, as declared by Sruti.[6] Since it has been established that Brahman is both the material and first cause of the world and yet remains eternally Itself (immutable), the world must be but an apparent modification of Brahman[7] and as such, is but an illusion which is created by Maya and perceived as real by ignorance (avidya).[8] When the attributeless Brahman is known, then the illusion of the world existence ceases.[9]

[1] *Brahma Sutras*, 2:1:24.
[2] *Ibid.*, 2:1:25.
[3] *Ibid.*, 2:1:26.
[4] *Ibid.*, 2:1:27.
[5] *Ibid.*, 2:1:28
[6] *Ibid.*, 2:1:30.
[7] *Ibid.*, 2:1:37. But Brahman as Ishwara.
[8] *Ibid.*, 3:2:11.
[9] *Ibid.*, 3:2:22-23.

There are five major points—or actually five variations of one point, i.e. the principle of Identity (non-duality)—made by Shankara in this argument to substantiate his assertion that from an absolute or metaphysical standpoint the world is illusion, not ultimately real :

1) Sruti : Only Brahman *is*, one alone without a second. Therefore any existence different from Brahman (i.e. the impermanent and manifold world) is illusory, ultimately unreal.

2) Causality : An effect is identical with its cause and non-different from its cause; the world is an effect of Brahman; therefore the world and Brahman are identical. Further, since effect is non-different from its cause, an effect must have the same essential nature as its cause, and since the nature of Brahman is attributeless (nirguna), the phenomenal world of variety, change, etc., is an illusion, ultimately unreal. The different effect—the phenomenal world—cannot be an ultimately real but only apparent modification (vivarta) of Brahman. For the truth as proclaimed by Sruti and realised in samadhi is that of oneness, non-duality. Since the effect is non-different from its cause, only the latter is *truly* real; all else is but words, verbal distinctions. As Sruti says, in knowing a lump of earth the real nature of all things made from earth is known. The earth retains its self-identical reality as earth apart from all its many modifications (pots, dishes) which are but names arising from speech.[1] Likewise is Brahman alone Real, non-dual, one without a second.[2]

3) Ontology : Only the Self (Brahman) absolutely *is*. This is declared by Sruti and realised in samadhi. Since only the Self *is*, the non-Self (i.e. the phenomenal world) is not nor can be but can only *appear* to be and this appearance is an illusion (mithya). Being is infinitely and eternally invariable; it never changes; it never ceases to be and it never appears. It (sat) is ultimately real and the only Reality, absolute existence. Absolute non-existence (asat) has not been, is not and will not be. When we speak of the son of a barren woman, we are speaking of an absolute non-existent (which is in this example a phantastic and merely verbal creation). An illusion (mithya) is an existence which neither absolutely is (sat) nor absolutely is not (asat); it *comes into* existence and *ceases* to exist—i.e. it *appears*—and thus is a false existence. When it is declared that only Brahman

[1] *Chandogya Upanishad*, 6:1:4-6.

[2] Shankara's entire discussion of causality is, of course, designed only to establish the concept of Identity—i.e. between Brahman and the world there is no causality but only identity ; the world is Brahman as It is perceived by the forms of the intellect which are forms of ignorance. Causality, having its root in the organisation of the intellect, binds together all phenomena of the phenomenal world but does not bind the phenomenal world (illusory appearance) to Brahman (Reality) which is its substratum and which 'shines' through it, no more than it ontologically binds the illusory snake to the real rope. But, as Deussen well observes, in so establishing the principle of Identity, Shankara's Vedanta "forms too wide a concept of causality, in that it not only comprehends under this idea the bond of variations which only have to do with the qualities, forms and conditions of substance, but also the bond between substance and qualities, and also between substance and substance." (*System of the Vedanta*, trans. C. Johnston, 1912, p. 256.)

is, then that which is not Brahman either absolutely non-exists (a phantasy) or only empirically exists (i.e. neither absolutely non-exists nor absolutely exists, an illusion). The latter is the status of the world; for it does not absolutely non-exist (since we experience it objectively through the senses in a waking state) and it does not absolutely exist (since qua *phenomenal* world, it is not of the essential nature of Brahman). It exists—but falsely as an appearance; for in Shankara's absolutist scheme of things, what is Real (Brahman) never appears and what appears is never Real.[1]

The nature of an illusion, therefore, according to this ontological scheme is the perception (objectively produced by Maya) and the corresponding conception (subjectively produced by avidya) that 'This is that', when in fact (i.e. apart from the misperception and misconception) the 'this' is *not* 'that', but only 'this' *is*. In the snake-rope analogy—'this' (the rope) is 'that' (the snake)—only the rope truly *is*, and its reality or being is the basis and locus of the apparent existence of the snake; if the rope did not in fact exist, the snake could not have been mis-perceived as existing. Likewise in the world illusion, only Brahman ('this') *is*, i.e. is *real*, independent of the act of knowing, existing as the substratum for an ultimately non-existing, unreal world. The illusory world is thus dependent upon Brahman (Being), just as the illusory snake is dependent upon the real rope.[2] 'This' is only 'this'; it is not what it *is not* (i.e. 'that') nor can it become what it is not.[3] It can only *appear* to be what it is not, and this is an illusion. Brahman *appears* as the world, or rather, the world is the appearance of Brahman because of the cosmic Maya and as a mere appearance is totally external and unessential to the intrinsic nature of Brahman and is therefore false. The impermanent and manifold world of phenomena is but a superimposition (adhasya) of illusion upon Reality; it is only an apparent and ultimately unreal modification (vivarta) of the immutable Brahman.[4]

[1] Murti puts the ontological position of the Advaita succinctly as follows : "Brahman is the reality of the world ; conversely the world is the appearance of Brahman ..What appears is false, and the false merely appears. It is all surface and no depth. The real never appears ; it is all depth, substance and no surface." (*K.C. Bhattacharyya Memorial Volume*, p. 138.)

[2] It should be noted that in saying that Brahman as Reality is the substratum of the world as illusion and that consequently the 'existence' of the world is dependent upon the existence of Brahman (just as the illusion of the snake is dependent upon the acutality of the rope) the existence of Brahman is in no wise dependent upon the 'existence' of the world nor in any way affected by the world-illusion (just as the real rope is not affected by the illusory snake). Vide *Brahma Sutras*, 1:4:3.

[3] The correction or cancellation of an illusion may be stated ontologically in the fuller proposition : "This is this ; this is not that", the 'not' referring to 'that', such that "this is" but "That is not". E.g., "the rope is not a snake" means that "the rope is" but "the snake is not"; the negative judgment applies to the correction of unreality while reality remains untouched and absolute in its own terms.

[4] See Paul Hacker, *Vivarta: Studien zur Geschichte der illusionistischen Kosmologie und Erkenntnistheorie der Inder*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, 1953, pp. 24f. Hacker characterises Shankara's cosmology as 'a sort of illusionist Parinamavada'

4) Epistemology : Just as Brahman is pure Being (sat), everywhere formless and immutable, so Brahman is also pure Consciousness (chit), everywhere formless, limitless and self-luminous, and as such, cannot be the object of any other consciousness. The phenomenal world, however, is the object of consciousness (chit), not being self-luminous. That is, phenomena are manifested as objects or forms of consciousness through a mental state (vritti). As objects or forms of unitary and limitless consciousness, phenomena are limitations, finite determinations of consciousness, and since this is contrary to the formless and illimitable nature of consciousness (chit), the forms associated with consciousness are illusory superimpositions. The phenomenal world is, therefore, unreal. Moreover, the entire cognitive process is ultimately false; for not only objects of knowledge (prameya) but also the means of knowledge (pramana) and the knowing agent (pramati) are illusory. In order for there to be means of knowledge (such as perception, etc.), there must be an agent constituted by a body, organs of senses, etc., but the pure Self (Atman) as 'spiritual essence' (chit) can only ignorantly be said to have a body, etc. To attribute organs of sense, mind, etc. to the Self is erroneously to superimpose object upon subject (i.e. '*I* am this body, etc.' ; '*this* body, etc. is I'), two domains which by nature are utterly opposed to one another.[1] Without an agent of knowledge, the means of knowledge cannot function ; without means of knowledge, nothing can be known. Thus Shankara concludes that there is only the 'I', pure Self (Atman-Brahman) ; all else is false attribution (adhyasa) due to nescience (avidya).[2]

5) Logic : Whatever is true cannot be contradictory ; conversely, what is contradictory cannot be true. Since the nature of contradiction is established by existence (i.e. whatever *is* now, but ceases to *be* is judged contradictory), only absolute existence (sat) itself must be beyond contradiction and as such is true, i.e. real. The phenomenal world is characterized by contradiction of existence (i.e., 'is' and 'is not', now 'existing' and later 'not existing'), it is, therefore, not true, not real.

* *

Of all modern commentators on Shankara two—K.C. Bhattacharyya and S. Radhakrishnan—have special significance for our discussion of the nature of phenomenal existence. Firstly, both accept Shankara's Advaita as they understand it, though their respective interpretations are at variance with one another.

(p. 26) in as much as Shankara retains the old Vedic, realistic doctrine of emanation, adding to it the illusionist (vivarta) doctrine.

[1] See Shankara's 'Introduction' to his Bhashya, Sections I-II, in the excellent translation by Louis Renou, *Prolégomènes au Vedanta*, Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris, 1951.

[2] Indeed, as Shankara states in the heading of Section II of the 'Introduction' : "la surimposition est non-savoir, et le non-savoir est l'objet même des moyens de connaissance." (Ibid., p.3.)

Secondly, both have been widely influential thinkers, Radhakrishnan having been the chief exponent of Indian philosophy (especially Vedanta) to and for the West and K.C. Bhattacharyya having been perhaps the greatest theoretical or academical philosopher in India in recent times. We shall first consider Radhakrishnan's interpretation.

According to Radhakrishnan, Shankara's philosophy is "an ontological idealism and not an epistemological one."[1] Radhakrishnan doesn't actually explain what he means by "ontological idealism", but supposedly it refers to Shankara's acceptance of the existence of the phenomenal world as being *external* to individual consciousness in contradistinction to the Vijnanavadins, for example, who reduced the world existence to a series of appearing and disappearing subjective ideas. Accordingly it was asserted by these idealists that the perception of the world has no objective basis; we perceive only ideas but no objects. However, for Shankara, says Radhakrishnan, the world has an objective existence because it has its basis in Brahman. In actuality, Brahman and the world are one and exist as reality and appearance; "the finite is the infinite, hidden from our view through certain barriers."[2] The trouble is that "the finite mind views the world of experience as a reality in and by itself....The world is maya since it is not the essential truth of the infinite reality of Brahman."[3] The world, then, has a real basis; it exists objectively 'out there'; it is maya (i.e. not totally real) only in the sense that it has no independent existence but is viewed from a finite standpoint as being independently real.

That the world has for Shankara an objective reality is further demonstrated, says Radhakrishnan, by his refusal either to reduce waking experience to the status of dream or to attribute the existence of the world to avidya as its cause, as he charged the Buddhists with doing.[4] Brahman is the cause and basis of the world. Just as the illusory snake does not spring out of nothing and return to nothing once illusion is corrected, so also the world does not come from nothing and then suddenly dissipate into nothing. The nature of an illusion, says Radhakrishnan, is logical and psychological, not metaphysical. "The pluralistic universe is an error of judgment. Correction of the error means change of opinion. The rope appears as a snake, and when the illusion is over, the snake returns to the rope. So does the world of experience become transfigured in the intuition of Brahman. The world is not so much negated as reinterpreted."[5]

[1] *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 279.
[2] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 566.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Cf. *Brahma Sutras* 11: 2: 19.
[5] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 583. In what way it is 'reinterpreted' Radhakrishnan does not say, but we can suppose that, according to his analysis, the world is reinterpreted as not only not having a real existence independent of Brahman (whatever this may mean) but also as being the formal manifestation of Brahman under conditions of time and space. In that sense the world

Brahman is in the world as Reality in appearances. The world of appearance is based on Brahman and "bears within it traces of the eternal"[1], but it is not Brahman. Since it is based on the Real but is not the Real Itself, the world must at least be considered as "the appearance or phenomenon of the real. While the world is not the essential truth of Brahman, it is its phenomenal truth, the manner in which we are compelled to regard the real as it presents itself within our finite experience."[2] Considering all this, the world must be viewed as having some type of phenomenal truth and metaphysical status as a sort of 'contingent reality'.

Finally, Radhakrishnan produces a number of arguments based on religious concerns to establish the 'practical reality' of the world. For example, Shankara insisted that when moksha is attained, the world does not disappear; otherwise it would have done so with the first case of moksha. Moksha doesn't mean annihilation of the world for the jivanmukta, but only that the liberated person now has the "right perspective" regarding the pluralistic universe so that it can no longer mislead him.[3] Moreover, how could we ever talk about love, wisdom or asceticism as preparing us for moksha—or how could there even be moksha—if the world were illusory and unrelated to Brahman ? And so forth. All this leads us, according to Radhakrishnan, to conclude that Shankara's doctrine of maya simply means that the world is not real apart from Brahman, that the world is substantially Brahman and depends on Brahman. Therefore, Shankara cannot be called an illusionist since he never really taught that the world is an illusion : "unreal the world is, illusory it is not."[4]

This, then, is Radhakrishnan's analysis of Shankara, and as can be seen, it is one filled with a host of problems—hermeneutical, logical, semantical and philosophical. Although our main concern here is to consider whether this interpretation is 'fair' to Shankara, so to speak, we cannot help but observe that Radhakrishnan seems to stumble greatly over the meaning of the word 'illusion' and its derivatives. It is difficult to say just what Radhakrishnan means by 'illusion' as he uses this term in his interpretation of Shankara's absolutistic position. How, for example, can the world in a Shankarite Advaita scheme of things be at the same time unreal and yet not illusory (as Radhakrishnan says it is) ? What is an unreal non-illusory world ? If the world is not an illusion, is it real—in an unreal way ? Or, is it a phantasy (which it certainly cannot be according to Radhakrishnan) ? What sort of non-illusory unreality does the world have ? Does Radhakrishnan simply mean that the world is unreal "apart

of experience becomes 'transfigured'; everything that is, is seen to be Brahman. Whether this is actually what Shankara says, we shall discuss below.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 584.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 583.

from the Ultimate Reality" ?[1] If so, then how can it, ontologically and advaitically speaking, ever be "*apart* from the Ultimate Reality" ; for if it were, it would be not only *unreal* but *not at all*, and if it is real *not* apart from Ultimate Reality (and as we see, it cannot be *apart* and still be), then how can it ever be unreal, since it is also not an illusion ? Is the world, then, to be equated with Brahman, as Radhakrishnan seems at one point to do when he speaks of "the truth that the world is substantially Brahman" ?[2] Then, if so, the use of the word 'unreal' as applied to a non-illusory world is meaningless ; for the world would be as real as Reality and, accordingly, to speak of its ever being "apart from the Ultimate Reality" is equally meaningless. But Radhakrishnan puzzles us further when he compares the existence of the world to that of an *illusory* snake, says the existence of both is an "error of judgment" and then refuses to call the world illusory though the snake in his judgment is ![3]

At one point Radhakrishnan seems to mean by 'illusion' a phantasm, "a creation of the mind".[4] If this is the correct meaning of 'illusion', then Shankara was not an illusionist, for he denied that the world is a phantasy. Radhakrishnan rightly says that Shankara was not a subjective idealist like the Vijnanavadins and further that Shankara distinguished between dream and waking states, such that the world was not regarded by him as either a dream or a mere "creation of the mind". But, as we have seen, an illusion, in Shankara's use of this term, is not a phantastic production of the imagination or any other "creation of the mind"; it is the perceived appearance of a thing in an entity or locus where it in fact does not exist. Thus was the nature of the snake, and thus is the nature of the world. Both *appear* to exist, but the *actual* existence of both may be denied in all three possible temporal modes—past, present, future. The perceived existence of each is a false imputation (adhyasa) to Reality, resting upon nescience (avidya); this is illusion. The snake, for example, never *really* existed even when it was perceived. This is why it is called 'illusion' rather than 'phantasy'; it is perceived—or rather, *felt* to be perceived—in an entity where it is not nor was nor ever will be. At best it has a sort of 'floating' existence : it neither absolutely *is* nor absolutely *is not*; it's indefinable, inexpressible. So also, as far as Shankara is concerned, is the world.

Although Radhakrishnan states that the world is 'unreal', he probably means, as we have suggested, that it is unreal in that it has not an absolute existence (i.e. it is dependent upon Brahman), and thus he declares that "its reality is less

[1] *Indian Philosophy*, p. 586.

[2] But he also clearly states (*Indian Philosophy*, II, p. 584) that the world "is not the real itself". Which is the world : "substantially Brahman" or "not the real itself" ? Or what possibly can be the "phenomenal truth" of an "essential truth" which Radhakrishnan says the world is ? We cannot but believe that throughout his analysis, Radhakrishnan wants as a Shankarite to eat his cake (i.e. the world) and as a Hegelian keep it too !

[3] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, 582-583.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 578.

than that of Brahman".[1] In thus saying that the world is *less* real than Brahman, Radhakrishnan seems to imply that there are *degrees* of Reality—i.e. that something can be *more* or *less* real than Reality (Brahman). To the Absolutist that Shankara was this would be an impossibility. Something cannot be more or less real. There is only Reality—Brahman. All else is ultimately non-real, whether it be illusory existence or non-existence.[2] The world has at most only an empirical or conditional reality, but by the standard of Ultimate Reality such conditional reality is for Shankara an illusion, false, non-real. In the last analysis, as far as Shankara is concerned, it really means nothing to say, as Radhakrishnan does, "we deny only the existence of the world apart from or independent of Brahman"—i.e., the existence of prakriti or maya independent of spirit.[3] Radhakrishnan here speaks as though for Shankara there were spirit on one side and things (prakriti, phenomena) on the other. This is not the Advaita absolutistic position.[4] There is, according to Shankara, only Spirit (Brahman) which is the spirit of all things, their inmost self (atman), and this non-dual spirit (Brahman-Atman) alone is ultimately real. Shankara's proposition is that Brahman is the reality of the world and conversely, the world is the appearance of Brahman; his conclusion is that only Reality is real and what appears is false and what is false merely appears. Thus, for Radhakrishnan to say that the world is the appearance of Brahman is to admit already its illusory character. For to speak of the 'appearance' of something is to imply the distinction between the essential nature of that thing (what it is in itself) and its accidental nature (what under certain conditions, e.g. ignorance, it appears to be to percipients). As Murti has shown, in Advaita appearance is equated with the false (drsyatvat mithya), for "what appears always appears as another".[5]

Again, Radhakrishnan certainly does not prove the non-illusory nature of the world by saying that the world is 'manifested' by Brahman as Its 'phenomenal truth' and comes forth from and returns to Brahman just as the illusory snake 'springs out of' and 'passes into' the real rope.[6] Firstly, one can hardly say that

[1] *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 277.

[2] When Shankara states that the existence of the world is neither *sat* nor *asat*—i.e. that it is indefinable—he does not mean that it is a *mixture* of *sat* and *asat*. But this is what Radhakrishnan seems to be arguing, and in support he cites Plato's dictum that all finite things are made up of being and non-being (*Indian Philosophy*, p. 564). This is not Shankara's position certainly since Brahman, Being, can never be mixed or associated with non-being. Nor can we accept as Shankarite Radhakrishnan's statement that "this bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity must belong to Reality". How can it conceiveably belong to Reality ? Reality is Reality; nothing more or less. Anything else can only *appear* to belong to Reality and must be considered as non-real.

[3] *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 276.

[4] We acknowledge our indebtedness to Prof. Murti ("The Two Definitions of Brahman in the Advaita", *K. C. Bhattacharyya Memorial Volume*, pp. 133-150) for this point and the observations on the nature of appearance in the Advaita.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

[6] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 582-584.

according to Shankara Brahman actually 'manifests' the world any more than the rope manifests the snake; both are mere appearances, false imputations to reality. Secondly, in Shankara's absolutist scheme of things, 'phenomenal truth' judged by the standard of ultimate or essential truth is no truth at all. Thirdly, the snake never 'sprang from' the rope nor does it 'pass into' the rope; it simply never actually existed.[1] The perception of a snake 'out there' where in fact there was and is no snake at all, at any time, is totally untrue, an illusion.

Radhakrishnan throughout his interpretation of Shankara's doctrine of maya seems to be arguing two sets of propositions: (1) since the world is experienced, it must have a real basis and this reality is Brahman; and (2) since Brahman is Reality and the basis of the world, the world must have some sort of 'real reality' or at least a non-illusory quality. The first set is Shankara's, but the second set assuredly is not. Shankara would agree that we "penetrate to the real through the world",[2] but once we arrive at the Real, we cannot run back and pin a reality onto the world. According to Shankara, we start with the given-ness of the world of experience, the unreal, and by annihilating it, negating appearances we arrive not at a nihil, as Radhakrishnan thinks, but at the self-luminous Real.[3]

In conclusion, we should say that Radhakrishnan's major error, hermeneutically speaking, in his interpretation of Shankara's doctrine of illusion is that he doesn't respect Shankara's two distinct systems or levels of teaching or points of view (however one wishes to call it), namely his implicit distinction between the metaphysical and the empirical, based on the Vedantic doctrine of 'accommodation' (adhikari-bheda)—i.e. the truth to be taught is dependent upon the qualifications and capacity of the receiver.[4] For example, Radhakrishnan asserts that for Shankara *both* forms of Brahman (nirguna and saguna or Iswara) are

[1] Of course, the snake though illusory does have its locus of reality (in relation to which it is an illusion)—i.e. the rope. But, as Murti has remarked, "it is not that the rope had put on the snake-modification for a moment, and then had quietly subsided into its old form. It never had that form even when it was thought to have had it; it is not contended that it appears so *now* or that it would do so in the *future*. The appearance is not moored by any fastening to the real; it is just a 'floating adjective'." (*Bhattacharyya Memorial Volume*, p. 139; italics are Murti's.)

[2] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 583.

[3] Indeed according to Shankara, we can know Brahman *only* by negating the appearances which cover the Real from our view. As Prof. Murti has well put it: "Brahman is not one real and the world another beside it. Brahman is *the* reality of the world, its very essence. Without negating appearance we cannot know Brahman. If we could, there is no point in pronouncing the world false. It may be different from Brahman, but on that account it would not be false." (*Bhattacharyya Memorial Volume*, p. 136.)

[4] Bhattacharyya observes: "The duality of Brahman and the world is true to one steeped in desires, and encased in individuality; their unity is true to one who has come to *know*, to transcend individuality....To us, from the outside, *dvaita* and *advaita* are both true, as possible stages of knowledge, but *dvaita* is inferior in reality to *advaita*; they are not co-ordinate." (*Studies in Vedantism*, University of Calcutta, 1907, p. 25.)

'valid'.[1] He doesn't explain what he means by 'valid', but one can only assume he intends that both forms are equally *real* and *true*, and this, we believe, manifestly is contrary to Shankara's teachings.[2] Again, Radhakrishnan says that for Shankara the world "is of the nature of mithya and is eternal."[3] Again, the two standpoints are misleadingly compounded. Metaphysically, the world is an illusion (mithya); empirically, it is eternal. But as an illusion it is not eternal. As illusion it appears for a time to exist, but it does not exist—or appear to exist—for *all* times, simply because it is an illusion, an appearance. Not only does it cease 'to exist' when knowledge (jnana) replaces nescience (avidya); it is known never to have existed *actually* in any time because it is an illusion. Metaphysically, therefore, the world was never created and does not absolutely exist. One cannot say as Radhakrishnan does and yet be faithful to the internal logic of Shankara's absolutism that at the same time something is an illusion and is eternal. The nature of an illusion is that it *is* not eternally since it can and does cease to be; it is exhaustible and exhausted by an act of knowledge. For example, the illusion of the world-existence may be *beginningless* in time, but it is not *eternal* since it ceases 'to be' when the eternal truth of Reality is known.[4] Only Brahman is eternal since only Brahman is Reality (sat), and Reality is not exhausted by an act of knowledge. If the world is eternal, then it must also be real, for only the real can never cease to be. If it is real, it cannot also be illusion. And so forth. It is this confusion of Shankara's two levels or standpoints which leads Radhakrishnan into all manner of *non sequitur*.

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We now come to K.C. Bhattacharyya. Bhattacharyya is not really concerned to *prove* that Shankara was an illusionist; this fact he *assumes*, probably as being

[1] *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, p. 276. Possibly Radhakrishnan only means, like Bhattacharyya (footnote 2 above), that *exoterically* both forms are valid in so far as they are the contents of two 'possible stages of knowledge'. But from the tone of his discussion it seems that Radhakrishnan means more than that the two forms are empirically or exoterically 'valid', for he states that the two are *really* related—i.e. they interact, thus generating the cosmic process, etc. See also *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 519f: "Lower knowledge is not illusory..." Although Radhakrishnan recognizes that "Brahman cannot be both determinate (saguna) and indeterminate (nirguna)" (p. 541), yet he insists that the saguna aspect 'is not the mere self-projection of the yearning spirit or a floating air-bubble", that "it is the best image of the truth possible under our present conditions of knowledge." (p. 540) It seems to us that, all this being so, the saguna form would be as much an illusion as any other form of empirical knowledge; an *image* of truth, even the 'best', would still be for Shankara ultimately false, i.e. an illusion.

[2] See the last section (Chapter IV, Sec. 4) of the Bhashya.

[3] *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 278.

[4] See Dasgupta (*op. cit.*, pp. 452f) for an excellent discussion of the beginningless, but non-eternal nature of nescience, ajnana.

self-evident in Shankara's teachings. Certainly the doctrine of illusoriness of phenomenal existence is for Bhattacharyya an essential part of Shankara's teachings; for, as he says: "Shankara's doctrine of Maya is the logical pendant to his doctrine of Brahman as the undifferenced self-shining truth."[1] In the Advaita view both Maya and Brahman are scripturally revealed, beyond establishment by the natural pramana (e.g. reason); together they represent the conceptual formulation of the feeling of vanity in life and the demand for absolute certainty. Bhattacharyya's main concern in interpreting Shankara's Advaita is to understand what is the nature of an illusion, what is involved in the judgment of the world as being illusory, and what then must be the nature of Ultimate Reality (Brahman) in relation to illusion (Maya).

Illusion is, according to Bhattacharyya, an experiential fact; for if we did not have an actual experience of illusion, we could not possibly conceive of the illusoriness of the 'given-ness' of phenomenal existence. It is because we do experience illusory existence (pratibhasika) that the possible unreality of the empirically real world is intelligible. Moreover, there is something 'absolute' about an illusion, such that it *is* an illusion and nothing else—that is to say, that Knowledge (vidya), the correcting perception, denies the phenomenal truth of the former perception *once for all.* For example, let us say that one *mis*-perceives nacre on a shell as silver. When the illusion of silver ceases, one is conscious not of the absence of *real* silver but of the disappearance of illusory silver. What is perceived is the present nacre as the real existent which contradicts the absent silver as illusory existent, such that the knowledge of this illusion is expressible in the form: 'the *illusory* silver is absent' and not 'the (existent) silver is non-existent'. "The very perception of the illusory character of a thing is the perception of the illusory thing being absent: to light up the darkness is to destroy it."[2] To live in an illusion is to live totally not knowing that what one knows is in fact an illusion—in fact non-existent. To know that one has lived in an illusion is to perceive the absence of the never-present (i.e. illusory) fact. That is, the contradicting perception (the fact of nacre, in this example) totally destroys the phenomenal reality of the contradicted precept (the fact of silver). The contradiction is thus itself unreal; for *in fact* there is no contradiction. The perception of nacre destroys the cognition of 'this phenomenally real silver' such that there is only the cognition of 'that illusory is absent'. What is *in fact* is identity which is known through recognition of the identical thing. "The union of contradictories is uncritically accepted at first, only to be rejected when it is known to be a union of contradictories."[3]

[1] 'Shankara's Doctrine of Maya', *Proceedings of the First Indian Philosophical Congress,* the Calcutta Philosophical Society, 1927, p. 44.

[2] *Studies in Vedantism,* p. 24.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 25.

There is a distinct 'anatomy' of an illusion which Bhattacharyya brilliantly dissects. If we consider the Vedanta example of the illusion of mistaking a rope for a snake, we see there are three distinct stages of this illusion. First the snake is presented. It is not judged or affirmed to be real, but only *accepted* or *believed* to be real, *out there*. Second, the snake is 'corrected' by the perception of the rope. There is no negative judgment at this stage. That is, the rope is, of course, judged to be real, but the snake remains as an experience—as a cognition—having now, however, the quality of unreality. "The affirmation of the rope and the peculiar presentation of the snake presuppose each other. The affirmative judgment need not presuppose a negative judgment; it presupposes only the presentation of immediate unreality."[1] The affirmation of the rope in this second stage involves the correction or degradation of the first precept of the snake into an illusion. The affirmative judgment and the illusion are, in other words, merged together as mutually implicated, as related unity. The objective content of what is known now is 'rope, not snake'—a unique relation for "the unreal implies the real, but the real does not imply nor is it in any manner affected by the unreal."[2] The snake is not a mere subjective fact here. Upon the basis of the affirmation of the rope, the snake is regarded as unreal but yet something objective. "It is regarded as an objectively presented *no-fact*."[3]

In the third stage the correction of the snake's existence—its unreality—by the perception of the rope is now contemplated. It is found that memory does not testify that the snake *was* perceived, but only *felt* to be perceived. Whereas in the second stage it was taken to be an unreal *object*, in the third stage the 'facthood' of its perception is doubted. Since it is *felt* to have been perceived, it is on the one hand not felt to have been merely imagined, but on the other hand the fact of its having been perceived cannot be affirmed with any certainty. In the second stage the snake lost its reality; now it loses its objectivity. Being 'no possible object' it cannot be the subject of a judgment of which either existence can be denied absolutely or non-existence predicated. The only possible judgment is a self-contradictory one, which is not a judgment at all—i.e. 'that snake is unreal'. The difference between this contradiction of an illusion—its being indescribable either as existent or as non-existent—and that of a square circle is that the latter is merely imagined and realised by thought to be absolute nought (tuchchha). While the former 'is still given to us as a positive (bhava-rupa) unthinkable (anirvachya), it cannot yet be rejected as absolute nought."[4]

[1] *Proceedings*, p. 47.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 48. Italics mine.

[4] *Proceedings*, pp. 49-50.

In the second stage the unreal object is considered as at once existent and non-existent; in the third stage it is neither existent nor non-existent. This is really no contradiction; for the two terms cannot be related to contradict one another as they are not predicable of any assignable subject. And yet this relation is what is *given*; it is not constructed by thought. "As given, the relation may be regarded as a symbolism for thought-contradiction, as a problem or demand to realise the given-ness as false."[1]

This last stage leads to the realisation of absolute nought, just as the first two lead to it, and is in a sense, "the frontier between thought and faith".[2] Therefore, in illusion, we may speak of three levels or processes—those of uncritical thought, critical thought and faith—which correspond to the three views of Maya as concrete (vastavi), as unthinkable (anirvachaniya) and as nought (tuchchha). In the first process an object implicitly accepted as real is reduced to an appearance, but this reduction in reality is not simply a subjective process. It has an objective basis such that the transformation of a presented object (e.g. snake) into mere appearance means "the opening up of a new dimension of becoming in which objects come to acquire or lose reality."[3] No longer can we naively assume the hard reality of a world once and for all given; for this 'hard reality' is perpetually swinging between dream and waking manifestation. What was before accepted as the emergence of 'the new' in causality is now understood as an appearance (vivarta); causality is but a law of appearance, the causal power but cosmic magic, Maya, "the inexplicable world-process creatively turning up the unanticipable."[4]

It is the second process in illusion when critical thought reduces the objective appearance to the 'given unthinkable' that we understand Maya as that absolutely free power of Ishvara not only to put forth but also to retract objective appearance. It is because we *can* by critical thought reduce objective appearance to the status of unthinkable (the 'given' unobjective) that we can also intellectually apprehend freedom as *real*, not only as creative but, in the reversed process, as retractive—i.e. as *absolute*.

Now we come to the third stage or process in which the once *concrete*, then *unthinkable*, becomes *naught*. This is the point at which critical thought passes over into faith which reduces the unobjective, indescribable given-ness to absolute nought. According to Bhattacharyya, we have here the conception of Maya as absolute nought, which is essential for Shankara's monism. "The monism implies not merely that the world is an appearance and that this appearance is retractable but also that the retraction itself is unreal, is not even real as the free

[1] *Proceedings*, p. 50.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[4] *Ibid.*

nature of Brahman."[1] What this means is not merely that, like Ishvara, Brahman is detached from or free in respect to Maya but that for Brahman *Maya is not real at all* ! Absolutely there is no Maya; there is *only* Brahman, which as absolute truth and absolute reality does not need the denial of the opposite (falsity and unreality) to be itself. Though the *knowledge* of Brahman as the Real does depend upon the correction of the unreal, the knowledge of Brahman as the true does not depend upon the correction of falsity and does not include knowledge of falsity of the world as a necessary element. The point to which we are led is, finally, "that the ignorance of Brahman was itself unreal, to the last vestige of which the correction of the world as false and its cosmic obverse, the retraction of free power, *appeared real*".[2]

This, then, is Bhattacharyya's interpretation of the nature of phenomenal existence in Shankara's Advaita. What in effect Bhattacharyya is saying is that Shankara's doctrine of Maya involves not merely the correction of the perceived world as illusion (mithya), as unthinkable-indescribable-indefinable (anirvachya) given-ness (neither existent nor non-existent), but also the correction—or more precisely, the *rejection*—of this very correction as itself being false. But how can we stop there ? Surely the correction of the falsity of the prior correction of the falsity of the world-existence means (on the basis of Bhattacharyya's analysis) the rejection of a rejection—i.e. a sort of epistemological double-negative which is nothing but a total cancellation, a naught. In other words, to conceive of Brahman as *absolute* truth and reality implies that even illusion is itself ultimately an illusion, that the given cosmic unreality is a falsity, that falsity is itself false (tuchchatva), that Maya is naught (tuchcha), that zero equals zero ; it implies "not only rejection of the world as unreal but *absence of any reference to it by way of rejection.*"[3] The world is truly and literally *unspeakable* (anirvachya); this is the position of 'faith' for which we are prepared by a dialectical movement through the highest reaches of critical thought—then the leap of freedom from empiricality, the intuition, the knowledge ! *Only* Brahman *is* : nothing more—and nothig less !

This, then, is the absolute, uncompromising, exclusivistic conclusion of Shankara's Advaita as understood—we believe correctly—by Bhattacharyya.[4] We can see from his analysis that Bhattacharyya does not turn Shankara into a subjective idealist, that he respects Shankara's insistence on the 'objective' quality of illusion and his distinction between a mere phantasy or hallucination

[1] *Proceedings*, p. 52.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[4] The full and logical conclusion of Shankara's absolutism is that there is no bondage and no liberation ; no realization of Brahman, for there is *no one* to realize. The percipient, the percept, the perception are all illusory. Illusion is an illusion—as Bhattacharyya put it, Maya is tuchcha, nought, mithya of mithya !

and perceived empirical reality. The world is *out there*; it is perceived as an objective given-ness, but it becomes stripped first of its reality and then of its objectivity. It is reduced, like the snake, to a 'given unthinkable'—"a standing scandal to human reason" which calls into doubt the subjective reality of perception, forcing us finally to free ourselves from empirical subjectivity and to open ourselves to a suprarationally knowable Ultimate Reality and Eternal Truth.

(To be continued)

H. P. SULLIVAN

Sri Aurobindo as a Poet

(A Reply to an English Critic)

YOUR letter of the 1st August reached me a few days back. The "frank" and "truthful" expression of your opinion of Sri Aurobindo's poetry which it contains calls for an immediate reply.

You have stated three points to support your objections to Sri Aurobindo's poetry : 1) English poetry can be written only by those whose mother tongue is English because, as you say, "No alien can use the words of another language with the associative richness required by poetry". Since English was not Sri Aurobindo's mother tongue it was impossible for him to write English poetry of any worth. 2) For the same reason, it was also impossible for him to respond to what you call the "artistry" of English poetry. He could respond only to the "ideas" in English poems, as you remark he has done in his book *The Future Poetry*. This implies that the book has value only as a criticism of the thought of English poetry and none as an appreciation of its art. 3) As a poet he was a "failure". He was, in fact, only a great thinker and not a poet at all, and to call him a poet is not only improper but actually amounts to doing disservice to his name.

In regard to your first two objections, I leave aside for the moment the general question of the possibility of the Indian poets writing successfully in the English language and state only the relevant facts of Sri Aurobindo's life concerning his knowledge of English of which apparently you are unaware. I quote his own words extracted from some notes he gave while reading the manuscripts of one of his biographies sent to him for correction :

"Aurobindo was born on August 15, 1872, in Calcutta. His father, a man of great ability and strong personality, had been among the first to go to England for his education. He returned entirely anglicised in habits, ideas and ideals,—so strongly that his Aurobindo as a child spoke English and Hindustani only and learned his mother tongue only after his return from England (at the age of 21). He was determined that his children should receive an entirely European upbringing. While in India they were sent for the beginning of their education to an Irish nuns' school at Darjeeling and in 1879 he took his three sons to England and placed them with an English clergyman and his wife with strict instructions that they should not be allowed to make the acquaintance of any Indian or undergo

any Indian influence. These instructions were carried out to the letter and Aurobindo grew up in entire ignorance of India, her people, her religion and her culture....

"Aurobindo gave his attention to the classics at Manchester and at St. Paul's; but even at St. Paul's in the last three years he simply went through his school course and spent most of his spare time in general reading, especially English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, mediaeval and modern Europe. He spent some time also over learning Italian, some German and a little Spanish. He spent much time too in writing poetry. The school studies during this period engaged very little of his time; he was already at ease in them and did not think it necessary to labour over them any longer. All the same he was able to win all the prizes in King's College in one year for Greek and Latin verse, etc."

About the early English poems which he wrote between his eighteenth and twentieth years in England he says : "He knew nothing about India or her culture, etc. What these poems express is the education and imaginations and ideas and feelings created by a purely European culture and surroundings—it could not be otherwise."

It is quite evident from these statements that for nearly two decades in the earlier formative period of his life Sri Aurobindo not only lived amidst English surroundings and grew intimately familiar with English life, language and culture in a direct and natural manner, but also wrote English poetry out of this familiarity. In fact, it was the culture and language of his mother country which at this time were alien to him and which he had to learn by deliberate effort after returning to India. No ground is therefore left for your first two objections that it was impossible for him to write poetry in English or to respond to the "artistry" of English poets because English was not his native language.

It is also necessary to bear in mind that even after his return to India his mastery over the English language grew constantly with his handling of it as the medium of expression of his poetic vision and inspiration. For, in expressing this vision and inspiration, he was not merely using English within its present capacities, but was all along trying to mould it to an ever higher perfection so as to make it a fit instrument for the greater needs of the future poetry, of which he not only saw the promise and traced out the tentative lines of unfoldment, but also gave ample demonstration in his own achievement, especially in the great epic *Savitri*. After he took to spiritual life in 1910 his aim was not to write poetry for its own sake, but to make it a fit medium for the expression of the spiritual truth of the new age that he saw was dawning over humanity. It was his view that the English language had a greater potentiality of development for this purpose than any other; so in writing his poetry he constantly tried to realise that potentiality. In doing this he may seem to the conservative English literary mind to be breaking

the conventional forms of the English language, but that was not because of his ignorance of or unfamiliarity with its native associations, or his inaptitude in handling the poetic technique, or his lack of poetic faculty, but because, with all the skill and scruple of his creative genius, he was new-moulding it for the pressing need of the future age. That he succeeded in this endeavour to the extent of making the English tongue subtle, supple and rich enough to be an apt medium of the utterance of the *mantra*, not only in rare lines as hitherto in English literature, but in vast stretches of glowing outbursts of spiritual inspiration and vision, is a feat which should fill the forward-looking and receptive mind with wonder and amazement. If it fails to do so it is only a sign of the incomprehension of an over-cautious conservatism which looks upon even the truly creative and fruitful departures from the present limits with suspicion and antipathy.

But even this countering of your first two objections by showing that the ground on which they rest does not exist in fact, is not likely to bring conviction to you because you have put forth a third objection which has no necessary relation to the first two. For you have finally said that Sri Aurobindo is only a thinker and no poet at all—which really means that even if English was as good as his native tongue he could not have written poetry in that or any language, for surely, to write poetry it is not enough to have a native familiarity with the language or to know the poetic technique. (I may add for your information that Sri Aurobindo has written all his poetry in English. Except for one or two brief tentative attempts, he has not written any poetry in Bengali. So any estimate of his poetry or of his standing as a poet is to be based on his English production.) A factor more essential than these requisites is needed—the poetic inspiration, which is the very life-breath of poetry and without which even the perfect mastery over language and technique would not suffice. Your contention that Sri Aurobindo is not a poet at all could therefore only mean that he was entirely void of poetic inspiration ! A proposition like this, if you really mean to advance it, is so utterly stupefying that one would hardly think it worthwhile to give any consideration to it. For what could one say to a person who self-confidently asserts that the sun has no light or the ocean no water ! Perhaps I could only point out that if your verdict is true then not only all those—and they are not all his disciples or Indians, they include some competent English minds too—who rank him as a great poet and count his *Savitri* among the world's greatest poems or even the greatest of all, are wholly deluded, but he himself was suffering all his life from a complete self-delusion, for he maintained that he was a poet first and always and became a philosophic seer and thinker only after he took to Yoga. You would probably say that he wasted so much of his time and energy in a fruitless channel when he could have put it to better use elsewhere !

It need hardly be added that his poetic development followed the same curve of evolution as that of his consciousness through Yoga, and therefore all his poetry did not reach the same supreme height as in a work like *Savitri*; but

even at its lowest pitch it is always genuine poetry written with unmistakable inspiration. So scrupulous an artist like him and one so utterly careless of fame would hardly produce anything of doubtful quality, or care to publish anything lacking in genuine worth. He himself was the best judge of his work and he was sufficiently clear-sighted not to delude himself about its value. As regards the estimation of his work by others one may say without exaggeration that it will need perhaps a long time before its value is fully appreciated—the mind of the present age is not sufficiently open and receptive to respond adequately to the vast and lofty spiritual inspiration and vision his poetry brings. He is far too ahead of the present times in the field of poetry as in all other fields of his endeavour. It is not surprising that he often meets with incomprehension and condemnation even from quarters where one might expect some recognition.

On the general question of Indo-English poetry I need only say that the issue cannot be simply settled by entirely denying its possibility as you have done. I admit that there is some truth in what you say, for it is extremely difficult for a poet to write successful poetry in a foreign language. But the difficulty, however great, is not absolutely insuperable. It is not that every Indian poet who fancies to write in English will succeed in his attempt, nor even that a poet who is master in his own tongue will produce poetry of equal worth in a foreign medium. Still, the possibility of success in some cases cannot be entirely ruled out. Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1935: "The idea that Indians cannot succeed in English poetry is very much in the air just now but it cannot be taken as absolutely valid." Since then the question has been very much debated and many of those who formerly adhered to your opinion are now inclined to be less rigid in their view. Some Indian poets have already produced English poetry of unmistakable quality and it is only mere prejudice that can prevent anyone from recognizing its entire success.

There is also the historical fact pointed out by Sri Aurobindo that "both in French and English there are instances of foreigners who have taken their place as prose-writers or poets." Why then such a possibility be considered entirely out of the question in the case of Indians?

At the present juncture this issue has a wider bearing which can no longer be ignored. The English language has by now become so international that outside England it is gradually outgrowing its insular peculiarities. In this process, which is sure to accelerate in the coming years, its development is not likely to remain exclusively in the hands of the English people. Other nations who have been making a living use of it for some generations may develop it on quite unique lines, and in some directions might even use it to ends far greater than the English people themselves are capable of. In India the English language has been in dynamic use for over a century and it has taken such deep and firm roots that even after twelve years of national independence we are not unani-

mously agreed to discard it in favour of another language out of narrow nationalistic sentiments. The world is fast moving towards an international outlook and culture and since for the development of that outlook and culture the English language can be extremely helpful we see no reason why we should not retain it and put it to the best use for this great purpose. In doing so in the distinctive manner of the Indian culture, the creative mind of India may shape the English language on lines which may be different from those of the English people. Especially for the expression of the spiritual experience the English language has great potentiality and now that the spiritual genius of India is swiftly awakening after centuries of slumber with a new power of incalculable possibilities—the Supermind—, it may, if it chooses to lay hands on the English tongue as its fit vehicle of expression, shape out of it unimaginable marvels which will enrich the world-culture more than anything else. As Sri Aurobindo said: "If our aim is to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and experience of all kinds in poetry, the English tongue is the most widespread and is capable of profound turns of mystic expression which make it admirably fitted for the purpose; if it could be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying." He also wrote that "the English language has still several strings to its bow and is not confined to an aged worn-out England." It is therefore not unlikely that in the coming years the English language may find itself renewed and revitalised more in an alien country than in its native land.

September 14, 1959 KISHOR GANDHI

Our Yoga and The Tantra

I

AS we were about to take up this subject it so happened that there was a call by a young seeker under peculiar circumstances which could provide an interesting starting-point for our discussion. This young man had received a Mantra from a Guru some three years ago. As he was practising its Japa he was surprised to find, after six months, the Kundalini rising up of its own accord. But this movement had an adverse reaction in his system, both nervous and physical. He had never sought to awaken the Kundalini; he was content to proceed along the Bhakti Marga with the aid of the Mantra which was giving him an increasing joy of devotion. But each time he repeated the Mantra the Kundalini would stir. He tried to stop repeating the Mantra vocally and took to mental Japa. Even then, if the vibrations touched the lower centres in the body, the Kundalini would move and physical inconvenience ensue. He was thus in a difficult position. In the meanwhile he had studied some of the writings of Sri Aurobindo on the Integral Yoga, particularly his Letters on Yoga and began to practise the methods advised therein. Let him speak further : "I practically stopped chanting and began to put to practise the aspiration for descent. I was able to maintain the sense of descent in office work and other times and continued it in sleep as continuously as possible. After the early morning meditations, I used to have yogic sleep. I had the experience of descent of Mother's Force in the head recently for three or four times during the yogic sleep, immediately after morning meditations. Mother's Force once touched my heart centre also."

Now, though he had thus stopped chanting the Mantra, the Mantra began to come up spontaneously and repeat itself. And the object of his visit was to find out how he was to proceed and to know how far both the methods could be combined or if it was necessary to discontinue the one and to take to the other exclusively. In other words, is Mantra sadhana compatible with the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo ? And we may ask ourselves—since Mantra Japa is only a part of the Yoga methodised in the Tantras—what is the relation between the Doctrine and Practice of the Tantras and the Thought and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo ?

It is helpful, at the outset, to have a clear idea of what is meant by the Tantric Yoga. For there are many conceptions—and misconceptions—on this matter necessitating a clear enunciation of its principle, its process and its goal. The

Yoga of the Tantra has for its aim, like the other traditional Yogas, union of the individual self with the Divine. But it is not just one more Yoga among the many. It represents a grand effort at synthesis of the several lines of spiritual discipline in vogue in India. As is well known, each system of Yoga is based upon a particular principle or power of being and works out its aim of union with the Divine on that chosen basis. Thus the Hatha Yoga proceeds by the control and purification and mastery over the physical body and its life-energy to release a latent divine power in the body into an action which culminates in the liberation of the being into an ecstatic samadhi. The Raja Yoga leans primarily on the purification and subtilisation of the mind, supported by a controlled life-power operating in a regulated body, leading to a gradual cessation of the mental activities in the Silence or Nirvana of the Immutable Brahman. The Bhakti Yoga leads the seeker through his heart, his emotions; the Karma Yoga through the operation of his dynamic will which is yoked to the Divine; the Jnana Yoga through the culturing and development of the mind in the ways of Knowledge. In short each path stresses one special faculty of the individual and uses it as a lever for rising upwards to the Divine. The Yoga of the Tantra, it may be pointed out, takes up man as a whole. It gathers up all his faculties and uses all the methods described above, in varying combinations, to effect its daring objective which is nothing less than the graduation of animal-man into god-man.

II

In the philosophy of the Tantra—specially the Shakta Tantra—the universe is a manifestation of a Divine Shakti, a Supreme Consciousness whose nature is Power. This Shakti has two poises, the static and the dynamic, the poise of rest supporting the poise of action. And the interaction of these two poles of Her Being brings out of Herself and sustains the entire Creation in Her mood for the Bliss of expression. And this truth of the manifestation of the Cosmos is repeated in each individual unit. For in man too there is this divine Shakti operating in different forms and keeping him alive. Only, the full power of it is not active in him. Most of it is lying latent and, normally, only so much of it as is indispensable for the functioning of the body, life and mind is active. That is why man remains an incomplete being, his powers of expression and effectuation so limited. The Tantra aims to tap this reservoir, set in motion the latent energy and give full meaning to the individual concentration of Power that is Man. The power which is thus lying unused in the human body is the Kundalini Shakti. The means by which the Tantra seeks to awaken and set it in motion is the Kundalini Yoga.

In the imagery of the Tantras this Power is conceived as a serpent sleeping coiled up at the base of the spinal column. The first object of the Kundalini Yoga is to awaken and stir this Serpent Power into action. By certain exercises

of breath and the repetition of Mantra under the guidance of the Guru, preceded by preliminary steps of purification and movements of devotion, pressure is exerted upon the sleeping Kundalini to rise. Once it is thus awakened and set into movement, it raises its hood and inclines to its natural passage along the spinal column. The next step is to lead and direct this Shakti on the move, by appropriate steps of evocation, upwards through the Sushumna Nadi in the middle of the column. It is here along the spinal column, *Meru Daṇḍa*, that there are located the Lotuses or Chakras, the several focal Centres governing the organisation of our system. Each of these Centres commands its respective region : the *Mūlādhāra* at the lowest nervous plexus governing the physical, the *Svādhiṣṭhāna* presiding over the lower vital domains, the *Maṇipuraka* controlling the larger vital and so on. Now the awakened Kundalini is led up to each of these Centres which are opened up at its impact releasing the powers therein into a wider movement. The Kundalini in its ascent 'swallows up' the *tattva*, principle, of each, i.e. takes possession of each station and the region commanded by it. Thus led step by step, from Chakra to Chakra—there are six[1] of them—the Kundalini is at last taken to the highest Centre, the *Sahasrāra* at the crown of the head, where Shiva awaits the Shakti. In other words the dynamic or the expressional poise of the Power is joined to its static, pure and supporting status from which it was so long separated, as it were, and there ensues a liberating bliss in which state nothing exists but sheer Ananda. This is the central achievement of the Kundalini Yoga, *Mukti*.

But Mukti is not the end.

The Kundalini Shakti does not stay long at the summit centre so reached. She comes down and brings with Her the nectarous Delight of Union in which the entire being is bathed. There is a regular movement upward and downward of this dynamic Shakti with whom the Jiva is identified and progressively merged. In this movement are taken up the various faculties of the being at different centres and they are informed and charged with the higher formulations of Consciousness realised in the ascent of the Shakti, and the Bliss released into the system. Both in the process of the Yoga and its culmination, the diverse powers of the being and their movements are subjected to a discipline of purification, elevation into a status proper to the pitch of the Shakti that demands expression. For at each level of life, the physical, the pranic or vital, the mental, the emotional, the blossoming Shakti seeks unfettered expression, Her Lila of enjoyment, *bhoga*. After Mukti, *Bhukti*. The Delight of manifestation which is derived on the cosmic level by the Supreme Shakti is sought to be repeated in the individual form, from an individual centre, by the same Shakti individualised for that purpose. All the movements and all the activities of the seeker are thus lifted up into a

[1] The *Sahasrāra*, the seventh, being usually excluded from the Chakras *within* the body, as it is located above the head.

new dimension; the individual functions as a conscious local centre in the multitudinous manifestation and enjoyment of the Mahashakti.

III

This central truth of the Tantra, that Creation is a manifestation of the Divine, a Lila of the Divine Shakti who is the Supreme Mother of All and that the individual is meant to participate in this Play and share in its Joy on reaching his full maturity into the heights of knowledge, power and delight out of the kindergarten stages of ignorance, incapacity and grief, is of course accepted and given its full value in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. So too the truth that nothing can be done except through the grace and the dynamis of the Divine Shakti who is the Fount of all life. It is also accepted that the various faculties of the being of man should each be taken up and developed so as to serve in the greater expression of the Spirit. But the process differs.

In the Tantra one starts with the embodied Power and aims to reach the Spirit, the Divinity, through its instrumentation. Here in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the approach is in line with the Vedanta : the attempt is first to enter into the depths of the Soul within or open oneself to the Divine above and that achieved, to take up the body-life-power in its context.

Second, in the Yoga of the Tantra, each level of the being is opened up step by step from below upwards. But here it is the reverse. Man is taken as essentially a mental being, Manu, in whom the power of the spirit is more active and seizable in the mind than in the body. He opens to the Higher Spiritual Consciousness through the awakened mind and then lets the Influence reach and work upon other levels as they get ready. Normally, the lowest are the last to be so treated. Besides there is here no such willed opening of the centres as in the Tantric Yoga. The centres open by themselves as a result of the pressure from above or from within.

Third, the latent Shakti in the body is not pressured into awakening by mechanical processes as in the other Yoga. The embodied Power wakes and spreads out by itself as a result of the descent of the Higher Force of the Divine Mother whose vibrations strike and continue to strike the layers of the inner being, all over, releasing forces that are ready, preparing those that are not yet ready.

One of the main principles of the Integral Yoga is that not personal effort and reliance on one's own power but a large surrender to the greater Divine Power is the most effective means. It must be remembered that even at its highest, the Kundalini Power of the individual—the Shakti imbedded in the material or body consciousness—does not rise beyond the domain of this lower triple creation. The Divine Shakti that is invoked in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is the Supreme Power that not only extends itself universally, but *transcends* the creation, Para Shakti. It is this Mahashakti that does the sadhana and carries the seeker to the

heights of realisation, not his own puny will and striving. Of course individual effort has a place especially in the earlier stages till the surrender is complete and the Shakti takes up the Yoga. Aids like Mantra Sadhana, Japa, Asanas, devotional rituals, etc. can be used if necessary—and as long as they are necessary—but they are not indispensable. In other Yogas they are resorted to as supports to the personal exertions, *tapasyā*, of the sadhaka. In this Yoga, the demands of the Yoga-Power upon a sincere sadhaka are mainly three : aspiration, rejection and surrender. Aspiration for the Higher Light and all that it carries with it; rejection of all that stands in its way; surrender of all that one is and has to the Power that is invoked.

Not in the process alone but in the Ideal too there is a fundamental difference.

The Yoga of the Tantra certainly registers an advance upon the other traditional Yogas in as much as it is not satisfied with liberation, Mukti, of the soul, *jīva*, from the hold of Prakriti, Nature in Ignorance. It calls upon man to seize the whole of his Nature, subject it to the rule of the luminous Shakti into which he is reborn and so derive his full share in the cosmic enjoyment of the Divine Puissance. In other words, all the powers and faculties of man are assembled and raised to their full potency but within the human term. The utmost that is aimed at in the Tantric system is the development of man into a supremely powerful man, a spiritual man, a godly man. But still a man. Though liberated within, though poised on a divine pedestal in his dealings with the outer world, his nature is still subject to the limiting laws of mortality. Surely this is not the final destiny of one whom the revealed Word hails as the Son of Immortality, *amṛtasya putraḥ*.

It is possible, says Sri Aurobindo, for man to so change the very texture of his nature that it is no more subject to the rule of incapacity, decay and death. And to achieve this glorious objective is the aim of the crowning movement of his Yóga, *Transformation*. The key to this movement lies in the Descent of the highest grades of Knowledge-Power Consciousness constituting the *own body*, as it were, of the Divine Shakti at the head of Creation. As a result of a continuous ascent of the aspiring human consciousness and the responsive descent of the higher and yet higher layers of the vibrations of the Yoga-Shakti into the being of the seeker, there is prepared an *ādhār* in which the human or earthlier elements are gradually suffused and reconstituted by the luminous charge of the Spirit; the radical change, however, is brought about by the plenary descent and direct action of the Truth-Consciousness, the Supramental Mahashakti which alone can totally transform man into a super-man.

Thus far regarding the aim and scope of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga for the individual. We do not enter here into its implications for the future of collective man, *viśva mānava*.

M. P. PANDIT

Sri Aurobindo and The Problem of Human Relations

"All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony."
SRI AUROBINDO, *The Life Divine.*

I. THE DREAM OF HARMONY

EVER since the dawn of human history, man has been actuated by a persistent dream of triple harmony: harmony within man himself, social harmony between man and man, and harmony between man and the world around him. But to the man of our epoch, all these three basic harmonies have come to appear as so many vain and ineffectual dreams. For, as J.W. Krutch has aptly remarked, one of the most shocking features of our age is that "man's inhumanity to man" has reached what seems almost unparalelled proportions: there has been more violence, more brutality, more cold and calculated cruelty than at any time since the end of the ages we complacently call "dark". Thus the problem of right conduct of man towards his fellow-beings has assumed a first importance in our epoch.

The same problem of disbalance and disharmony has lately shown itself in an equally acute form also in the relation between the individual and the collectivity. The maladjustment between the individual's hopes and needs and aspirations and the demands of the organised society has become so much pronounced that the representative man of the century is "constantly (and unsuccessfully) striving to reconcile tendencies towards aggression and yielding; excessive demands on others, and fears of never getting anything; fantasies of boundless power, and feelings of utter helplessness."[1] Indeed, in this second half of the twentieth century, the problem of community—what it is and how it may be resolved in harmony and perfection—has become a live issue engaging the attention of philosophers and social scientists of diverse views.

The present essay is an attempt to show how in the Yoga-Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo these basic problems of human relations are viewed in the wider perspective of the meaning and sense of world-existence and thus acquire an altogether novel and significant hue. We shall see how this cosmic perspective not only helps us to unravel the mystery of these problems and understand

[1] Bernard Notcutt, *The Psychology of Personality*, p. 89.

clearly their true nature and inner significance, but also reveals to us at the same time the only, true and perfect way for their harmonious resolution.

II. Trends at War

If we probe deep enough we shall invariably come to see that "all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony."[1] In the sphere of human relations too—whether between man and man, or between the individual and collectivity—the essential problem is of harmonisation between two basic trends of man: the trend to over-accentuated individualisation and the individual's all-imperative impulse towards self-assertion and self-aggrandisement; and the trend to associate with others, the impulse towards cohesion and social solidarity, variously labelled from time to time as "gregarious instinct", "social instinct", "phylic force", "bio-social drive" and "herd instinct".

Indeed, "the whole process of Nature depends on a balancing and a constant tendency to harmony between two poles of life, the individual whom the whole or aggregate nourishes and the whole or aggregate which the individual helps to constitute. Human life forms no exception to the rule. Therefore the perfection of human life must involve the elaboration of an as yet unaccomplished harmony between these two poles of our existence, the individual and the social aggregate. The perfect society will be that which most entirely favours the perfection of the individual; the perfection of the individual will be incomplete if it does not help towards the perfect state of the social aggregate to which he belongs and eventually to that of the largest possible human aggregate, the whole of a united humanity....

"Therefore at every step humanity is confronted with various problems which arise not only from the difficulty of accord between the interests of the individual and those of the immediate aggregate, the community, but between the need and interests of the smaller integralities and the growth of that larger whole which is to ensphere them all."[2]

Now, confronted with the difficult task of harmonisation between his individualistic trend and his drive towards socialisation, man has laid an exclusive or dominant stress sometimes on the individual, at other times on the collectivity. In the first view wherein emphasis is laid on the individual, the society is considered to exist only as a field of activity and growth for the individual; its sole function is to help the individual to satisfy his needs and interests of all sorts. In the opposite view, the individual's importance is considered to be secondary; he has to live for the society, for he is only a cell of the group, "he has no other use or purpose of birth, no other meaning of his presence in Nature, no other

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (American Edition), p. 4.
[2] Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, pp. 8-9.

function."[1] We may recall in this connection Lenin's assertion that there could be no rights for the individual, as the individual was nothing more than "a multitude of one million divided by one million." But neither of these views is altogether valid and cannot be satisfying to the human soul. Of course, this alternation of stress is itself a part of the process of Nature leading to a final solution of the problem. For, as Sri Aurobindo has said: "It is a constant method of Nature, when she has two elements of a harmony to reconcile, to proceed at first by a long continued balancing in which she sometimes seems to lean entirely on one side, sometimes entirely to the other, at others to correct both excesses by a more or less successful temporary adjustment and moderating compromise. The two elements appear then as opponents necessary to each other who therefore labour to arrive at some conclusion of their strife. But as each has its egoism and that innate tendency of all things which drives them not only towards self-preservation but towards self-assertion in proportion to their available force, they seek each to arrive at a conclusion in which itself shall have the maximum part and dominate utterly if possible or even swallow up entirely the egoism of the other in its own egoism. Thus the progress towards harmony accomplishes itself by a strife of forces and seems often to be no effort towards concord or mutual adjustment at all, but rather towards a mutual devouring."[2]

But somehow or other we have to find a perfect reconciliation between Freedom and Harmony, Unity and Diversity, growth of the individual and the development of the social being. For both the individual and the collectivity are fundamental truths of existence. And to curb the freedom of the individual for the sake of social order and stability, or to inhibit the growth of the society for the sake of the self-seeking demands of the individual cannot in the nature of things offer any lasting solution. For the inner spirit of man is bound to revolt and break down again and again all compromising structures until the true basis of harmonisation is discovered in principle and applied in practice.

If we turn our gaze from the problem of community to the sphere of man's relations with other individual men, we come to witness the same tragic spectacle. Here, too, the same maladjustment and disbalance between the two basic drives of man—egoistic self-assertion and self-enlargement matched by an almost instinctive hunger for cohesion and solidarity with fellow-beings—vitiate for ever all human relations. Indeed, a separate being at odds with other separate beings—this is the normal status of the individual man; for he takes his stand on the consciousness of a separate ego and all his reactions arise out of this basic situation. All the divided strainings of individual natures, passions and strifes of separate egos, mutual ignorance and discordant notes, conflicts

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 927.
[2] Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, p. 14.

of minds and hearts and vital temperaments, conflicts even of separate interests: these are but natural and inevitable accompaniments of human relations.[1]

Such is then the inadequacy and imperfection of all actual human relations. But man cannot for ever remain satisfied with this insecure basis for his social life. But the question is: how to solve this problem of harmonisation? It is evident that an "imposed unanimity of mind and life", a mechanical organisation of the communal existence, a "rationalised piecing together" of the opposing elements or any other ingenuity of mental, vital or physical construction can never accomplish the perfect harmony. All external attempts at harmonisation are bound to fail, for they miss the true clue to the situation. It is a unifying and harmonising knowledge that can alone find the way. But this knowledge can come to us only if we care to study the true metaphysical significance of the two basic trends of man; and for that, again, we have to go down in thought even to the sub-atomic level of existence; for, as we shall presently see, the problem of human relations is essentially an evolutionary problem intimately linked to the very march of world-existence. In fact, man's problem is by no means an isolated or unique one: it is a significant scene in a cosmic drama, an important link in a developing whole. The two basic drives of man towards cooperation and conflict, individualisation and socialisation with their attendant problems of mutual adjustment are manifestations on the human plane of a dual principle that is operative throughout the whole course of inorganic, organic and biological evolution.

Thus, to understand fully the real import of these two urges, we have to place them against an evolutionary perspective; and to judge adequately the problems of human relations, we have to call in as a witness the whole panorama of life.

III. An Evolutionary Problem[2]

If we glean and integrate modern scientific findings—whether physical, biological or psychological—we cannot fail to note the striking fact that all this knowledge tends to corroborate in an astonishing way the following basic statement of Sri Aurobindo: "Unity is the very basis of existence. The oneness that is secretly at the foundation of all things, the evolving spirit in Nature is moved to realise consciously at the top; the evolution moves through diversity, from a simple to a complex oneness. Unity the race moves towards and must one day realise. But uniformity is not the law of life. Life exists by diversity; it insists that every group, every being shall be, even while one with all the rest

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 913.

[2] For much of the material in this section, the writer is indebted to Professor Paul Halmos' works, especially to the very interesting book, *Towards a Measure of Man*.

in its universality, yet by some principle or ordered detail of variation unique."[1]

In fact the whole evolutionary problem turns out to be a various attempt at the harmonious equation of Unity to Diversity, Freedom to Order, Growth to Cohesion. In this connection we may recall a remarkable discovery of modern bio-sociological researches : the universal existence of a double principle of individual growth and collective cohesion at the basis of all manifestations of life on all its levels of simple or complex organisation. On one side there is the principle of individual growth entailing self-assertion and separation from 'others', on the other is the principle of cohesion implying a basic resistance operating universally in all separation. But what is noteworthy is the fact that this resistance manifests itself not on the plane of individual growth where this growth can be permanently negatived and thus the whole life-process brought to an end, but, rather, it acts as a force seeking restitution for the separation on a higher level of organisation. Thus these two principles, through their mutual opposition and secret cooperation, continue to govern life through all its specialisation on the various levels of evolution.

And what is still more important in the discovery is the fact that in the ultimate analysis this double principle seems to be the manifestation of a basic entelechy of union which has split itself up into the mutually complementary aspects of growth and cohesion at the dawn of organic life and possibly even before that. We say 'even before that', for as a matter of fact, there is an unbroken continuity between the living and the non-living, and "if we can pursue our inquiries farther, not obliged to stop short where our immediate means of investigation fail us, we may be sure from our unvarying experience of Nature that investigations thus pursued will in the end prove to us that there is no break, no rigid line of demarcation between the earth and the metal formed in it or between the metal and the plant and, pursuing the synthesis farther, that there is none either between the elements and atoms that constitute the earth or metal and the metal or earth that they constitute. Each step of this graded existence prepares the next, holds in itself what appears in that which follows it. Life is everywhere, secret or manifest, organised or elemental, involved or evolved, but universal, all-pervading, imperishable; only its forms and organisings differ." [2]

Thus, as Sherington has rightly observed, "when we systematize, the animate falls unconstrainedly into series with the inanimate. The inanimate then becomes merely a special case within the more general." [3] It is not without reason that A.N. Whitehead included the atomic and molecular aggregates of physics under the general concept of organism: "Science is taking on a new aspect which is neither purely physical, nor purely biological. It is becoming the study of organisms.

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, p. 296.
[2] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 166.
[3] Sherington, *Man and His Nature*, p. 122.

Biology is the study of the larger organisms; whereas physics is the study of the smaller organisms." [1] We may recall, too, in this connection the significant statement made by W.M. Wheeler in a slightly different context: "There is something fundamentally social in living things; and closer scrutiny shows that this must be characteristic of all life, since every organism is, at least temporarily, associated with other organisms, even if only with members of the opposite sex and with its parents....We may say, therefore, that the *social is a correlate as well as an emergent of all life* in the sense in which Morgan speaks of the Mind as being both a correlate and emergent of life....Indeed, the correlations of the social —using the term in its general sense—even *extend down through the non-living to the very atom with its organization of component electrons*" [2] (italics ours).

Now, in this uninterrupted inorganic-organic continuity, the fundamental entelechy of union manifests in various ways in the atomic constituents uniting into atoms, atoms uniting into molecules, and the aperiodic organic molecules uniting to form unicellular living beings. These are the first three levels of union in the elaboration of a cosmic evolutionary force. In the fourth level, multicellular organisms grow out of the unicellular creatures of the primeval slime, wherein the principle of cohesion tries to offset the lopsided action of the principle of individuation. For, as Paul Halmos has pointed out, "until multicellular organisms appeared mitosis (i.e. reproduction through cell-division) involved separation of the individual units of life. The evolutionary process would have come to a standstill had there not been a force powerful enough to oppose that separation and dispersion of life in spite of mitosis. No multicellular organism could have come into being without this rebellion against separation and dispersion. One of the two things had to happen: either cell-division ceased to involve separation, or a reunion of separated cells into colonies had to take place. Contemporary microbiology strongly supports the evolutionary hypothesis that both these occurred." [3] Indeed, in the cellular slime moulds there is first a unicellular stage of *separate, independent cells* followed by an aggregation of the single cells that cooperate in the development of one *unified structure*. "This unusal life cycle is useful in underlying the fact that the borderline between the development of one organism and the association and interaction of numerous organisms is indeed thin, for the slime moulds would appear to be doing *both*. If we examine other lower forms we are repeatedly confornted with the *problem of individuality*, for there appears to be *a continuous gradation* from the single-celled individuals through colonies of varying degrees of integration, and finally to multicellular individuals. The problem again arises in animal societies which Emerson[4] calls

[1] A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 105.
[2] W.M. Wheeler, *Emergent Evolution and the Development of Societies.*
[3] Paul Halmos, *Towards a Measure of Man*, p. 6.
[4] See chapter in *Structure et physiologie des sociétés animales* (CNRS, Paris), 1952.

'superorganisms', and in plants it arises in the compound filamentous forms such as the fleshy fungi"[1] (italics ours).

In the fifth level of union, the level of macro-organisms and metazoa, the cohesion is sought on a still higher level that may be described as *social.* For, in the very nature of the circumstances prevailing, the macro-organisms cannot remain in, or enter into, the inseparable organic bonds accepted by cell-colonies, for instance. Because plants need food and air and animals must move, macro-organisms could not survive in such bonds. Hence arises the well-known phenomenon of universal sociality in all higher organisms. But here, too, subsists the dualism of cooperation-competition. Thus although "...love and sociality, co-operation and sacrifice [are] the highest expressions of the central evolutionary process of the natural world",[2] this too cannot be denied that "competition and survival of the fittest are never wholly eliminated, but reappear on each new plane to work out the predominance of the higher, i.e. more integrated and associated type, the phalanx being victorious till in turn it meets the legion."[3]

At last we arrive at the sixth level of union, the level of man, typifying the emergence of conscious mind in evolution. Viewed in the background of phylogenesis discussed above, the so-called social instinct of man appears to be no more than the manifestation of "a perennial and universal principle of union that works on the human level under the double guise of a *Principium Sociale* and a *Principium Individuationis.*"[4] But the problem of harmonisation has also become more difficult in the case of self-aware man. Already in the case of other metazoa, the fulfilment of the principle of cohesion was made impossible on a purely biological plane. For that the social consciousness had to be created in order to counterbalance the principle of individual growth in isolation. But although this social platform of cohesion might have operated adequately on the animal level, the self-awareness of man the mental being has prevented him from having a spontaneous sociability and a spontaneous cohesion with his fellow-men, thus making the problem of adjustment infinitely more difficult in his case. As a matter of fact, as some social scientists have come to realise, the evolutionary process has not yet reached a stage where it is apparent how cohesion on the level of man should be realized. Most of what is abnormal in the human adjustment process is so on account of the lack of a proper harmonisation. Indeed "abnormality spells either over-socialization or over-individualization. The supremacy of either is a sham supremacy, for a man who is hypersocial without the complementary individuality of a corresponding power of uniqueness and autarchy is not socializing a genuine person but merely goes through the motions of 'communion' whereas the man who strives for an alien uniqueness of indivi-

[1] J.T. Bonner, *The Evolution of Development* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1958).

[2] & [3] Geddes and Thomson, *The Evolution of Sex*, pp. 329-330.

[4] Paul Halmos, *op.cit.*

duality without sustaining it by the life-blood of fellowship individuates not a person but a thing." [1] For, to quote Werner Wolff, "when an individual identifies himself to an extreme degree with a group, the effect is that he loses his value. On the other hand, a complete inability to identify has the effect that the environment loses its value for the individual. In both cases the dynamic relationship between individual and environment is distorted." [2]

Such is then the predicament of modern man viewed in the background of the whole panorama of life—a maladjusted being seeking desperately but missing always a true and harmonious adjustment with his fellow-men and with the society he lives in. But what is the fundamental meaning of the dual principle discussed above or its significance in the life of man ? In fact, what is the ultimate entelechy that is being worked out in the progressive elaboration of life with man as the latest, but by no means the last, product of evolution ?

The man of science is silent here; for basing his findings on outward and visible aspects alone, he can never expect to unravel the true mystery of things. In fact, as Prof. Bernal has pointed out, "the ultimate entelechy of aggregation... remains metaphysical" [3] and in the view of Paul Halmos, "the nature of the ultimate entelechy is such as to be beyond the scope of all our experience, past, present, and probably future."

But the clue to the mystery we must have if we would solve the problems of human relations. Otherwise we, in our philosophical, psychological or sociological researches, may go on for ever groping and probing in blinded darkness, but never reaching the true solution. In order to fix rightly the meaning of man's individual existence and the perfect aim and norm of his society, indeed in order to have a radical solution of all human ills, what is imperatively needed at the moment is a dynamic philosophy of Integral Humanism, and to whom else can we turn for this message of fulfilment and practical guidance, if not to Sri Aurobindo, the great Prophet of Divine Humanity ?

IV. Meaning of World-Existence

The Yoga-Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo arises out of an integral vision of the Integral Reality. It embodies not merely a well-reasoned structure of thought, but, above all, the fundamental truths of existence.

In Sri Aurobindo's vision of Integral Reality, the meaning and sense of our world-existence and the significance of the advent of man therein have to be sought in an evolutionary interpretation of the terrestrial existence. But this

[1] Paul Halmos, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[2] Werner Wolff, *The Threshold of the Abnormal*, pp. 131-132.
[3] Bernal, *The Physical Basis of Life.*

evolution is primarily and essentially an evolution of consciousness, the form-evolution discovered by modern science being no more than a subsidiary process meant to support the former with a progressively developing "exterior metre mould of form which is devised to sustain in matter the rising intonations of the spiritual harmony."[1]

In Sri Aurobindo's view, "an involution of the Divine Existence, the spiritual Reality, in the apparent inconscience of Matter is the starting-point of the evolution. But that Reality is in its nature an eternal Existence, Consciousness, Delight of Existence : the evolution must then be an emergence of this Existence, Consciousness, Delight of Existence, not at first in its essence or totality but in evolutionary forms that express or disguise it. Out of the Inconscient, Existence appears in a first evolutionary form as substance of Matter created by an inconscient Energy. Consciousness, involved and non-apparent in Matter, first emerges in the disguise of vital vibrations, animate but subconscient; then, in imperfect formulations of a conscient life, it strives towards self-finding through successive forms of that material substance, forms more and more adapted to its own completer expression. Consciousness in life, throwing off the primal insensibility of a material inanimation and nescience, labours to find itself more and more entirely in the Ignorance which is its first inevitable formulation; but it achieves at first only a primary mental perception and a vital awareness of self and things, a life perception which in its first forms depends on an internal sensation responsive to the contacts of other life and of Matter. Consciousness labours to manifest as best it can through the inadequacy of sensation its own inherent delight of being; but it can only formulate a partial pain and pleasure. In man the energising Consciousness appears as Mind more clearly aware of itself and things; this is still a partial and limited, not an integral power of itself, but a first conceptive potentiality and promise of integral emergence is visible. That integral emergence is the goal of evolving Nature."[2]

The self-effectuation of the Spirit in the world, its "great and long self-weaving in time", is then the secret of the process of evolution. But what is the essential purpose behind this colossal evolutionary movement ? In Sri Aurobindo's vision, if Brahman has entered form, it can only be to enjoy self-manifestation in the "figures of the relative and phenomenal consciosness". And the "purpose for which all this exclusive concentration we call the Ignorance is necessary is to trace the cycle of self-oblivion and self-discovery for the joy of which the Ignorance is assumed in Nature by the secret spirit....It is to find himself in the apparent opposites of his being and his nature that Sachchidananda descends into the material Nescience and puts on its phenomenal ignorance as a superficial mask in which he hides himself from his own conscious energy, leaving it self-forgetful and

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Problem of Rebirth*, p. 75.
[2] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 609-610.

absorbed in its works and forms. It is in those forms that the slowly awaking soul has to accept the phenomenal action of an ignorance which is really knowledge awaking progressively out of the original nescience, and it is in the new conditions created by these workings that it has to rediscover itself and divinely transform by that light the life which is thus labouring to fulfil the purpose of its descent into the Inconscience....To find and embody the All-Delight in an intense summary of its manifoldness, to achieve a possibility of the infinite Existence which could not be achieved in other conditions, to create out of Matter a temple of the Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born into the material universe."[1]

Now in the very nature of this world-play of Sachchidananda, the evolutionary ascent has to proceed through the mutual cooperation of the double terms: the universal and the individual. For they are the two essential terms into which the Absolute has descended in manifestation and always indeed they exist for each other and profit by each other. For "universe is a diffusion of the divine All in infinite Space and Time, the individual its concentration within limits of Space and Time. Universe seeks in infinite extension the divine totality it feels itself to be but cannot entirely realise; for in extension existence drives at a pluralistic sum of itself which can neither be the primal nor the final unit, but only a recurring decimal without end or beginning. Therefore it creates in itself a self-conscious concentration of the All through which it can aspire. In the conscious individual Prakriti turns back to perceive Purusha, World seeks after Self; God having entirely become Nature, Nature seeks to become progressively God.

"On the other hand it is by means of the universe that the individual is impelled to realise himself. Not only is it his foundation, his means, his field, the stuff of the divine Work; but also, since the concentration of the universal Life which he is takes place within limits and is not like the intensive unity of Brahman free from all conception of bound and term, he must necessarily universalise and impersonalise himself in order to manifest the divine All which is his reality. Yet is he called upon to preserve, even when he most extends himself in universality of consciousness, a mysterious transcendent something of which his sense of personality gives him an obscure and egoistic representation. Otherwise he has missed his goal, the problem set to him has not been solved, the divine work for which he accepted birth has not been done."[2]

Now if we look at the problem of human relations from this perspective of progressive revelation of Sachchidananda here in this mould of matter, we cannot fail to note that it is nothing but the transposition on the human level of a secret but profound dual urge that is the very constitutive basis of the whole movement. For, whatever comes into form and creation, being in its essence nothing else but the supreme Brahman who is the one without second, is always

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 526-527.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

spurred by the secret Sachchidananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) that is its true Self to realise at once its all-embracing unity and infinite omnipotence. But these two urges cannot be simultaneously satisfied on the basis of a fragmented consciousness. For the absolute completeness is not feasible in the finite ego-bound individual consciousness concentrated within the limits of the individual formation, because it is alien to the self-conception of the finite. Indeed "though Life is Power and the growth of the individual life means the growth of the individual Power, still the mere fact of its being a divided individualised life and force prevents it from really becoming master of its world. For that would mean to be master of the All-Force."[1] But this too is a permanent undeniable fact of existence that "a physical, vital, moral, mental increase by a more and more all-embracing experience, a more and more all-embracing possession, absorption, assimilation, enjoyment is the inevitable, fundamental, ineradicable impulse of Existence, once divided and individualised, yet ever secretly conscious of its all-embracing, all-possessing infinity. The impulse to realise that secret consciousness is the spur of the cosmic Divine, the lust of the embodied Self within every individual creature; and it is inevitable, just, salutary that it should seek to realise it first in the terms of life by an increasing growth and expansion".[2]

As a matter of fact, the individual's two urges to strive for infinite self-possession and possession of the world and to seek an integral unity with others in a growing movement of self-giving are the two poles of this unique truth of existence: "the inalienable all-possessing and self-possessing unity of the Divine". But in the middle terms of evolution, because of the intervention and interference of the self-limiting factor of ego, these two urges cannot be simultaneously satisfied in their infinite extent. Their true solution can be found only when the evolutionary process will arrive at its supreme and glorious end and Sachchidananda will stand revealed in its infinite splendour and Bliss even in this manifested existence. But till then the problem of harmonisation is bound to exist always and at every step of the ascent of life, and the progressive elaboration of life is nothing else but an attempt to seek this reconciliation in a more and more luminous way until the final unitary harmony is securely established. But that harmony lies even beyond the reaches of Mind and so man has to progress farther if he would solve his problems of relations. Let us now look at the various attempts at this harmonisation made by Life in different phases of its evolutionary ascent.

V. The Ascent of Life[3]

In existence, unity is "the master principle of which division is only a subordinate term, and to the principle of unity every divided form must therefore

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 177.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.
[3] Adapted from chaps. XIX-XXII of *The Life Divine*.

subordinate itself in one fashion or another by mechanical necessity, by compulsion, by assent or inducement." Thus "the atom, as it is the first aggregate," is also made by Nature "the first basis of aggregate unities" in the first material status of Life.

"When Life reaches its second status, that which we recognise as vitality, the contrary phenomenon takes the lead and the physical basis of the vital ego is obliged to consent to dissolution. Its constituents are broken up so that the elements of one life can be used to enter into the elemental formation of other lives."

"We have then two principles in Life, the necessity or the will of the separate ego to survive in its distinctness and guard its identity and the compulsion imposed upon it by Nature to fuse itself with others. In the physical world she lays much stress on the former impulse; for she needs to create stable separate forms, since it is her first and really her most difficult problem to create and maintain any such thing as a separative survival of individuality and a stable form for it in the incessant flux and motion of Energy and in the unity of the infinite....But as soon as Nature has secured a sufficient firmness in this respect for the safe conduct of her ulterior operations, she reverses the process; the individual form perishes and the aggregate life profits by the elements of the form that is thus dissolved. This, however, cannot be the last stage; that can only be reached when the two principles are harmonised, when the individual is able to persist in the consciousness of his individuality and yet fuse himself with others without disturbance of preservative equilibrium and interruption of survival."

"The terms of the problem presuppose the full emergence of Mind; for in vitality without conscious mind there can be no equation....The mental being expressive of soul-consciousness is the nodus of the persistent individual and the persistent aggregate life; in him their union and harmony become possible." "This mental status of life is a condition in which we rise progressively beyond the struggle for life by mutual devouring and the survival of the fittest by that struggle; for there is more and more a survival by mutual help and a self-perfectioning by mutual adaptation, interchange and fusion."

Indeed, in its life-origin, the law of association and "the law of love is the impulse to realise and fulfil oneself in others and by others, to be enriched by enriching, to possess and be possessed because without being possessed one does not possess oneself utterly." Ultimately all problems of life are problems of relations between self and not-self, and these problems can never be adequately solved unless and until one comes to experience the not-self as one's own self. And this is, in essence, what the evolutionary ascent of life is seeking to realise here on earth: a simultaneous mutual possession of the self and the not-self.

"All the difficult effort of man towards the harmonisation of self-affirmation and freedom, by which he possesses himself, with association and love, fraternity,

comradeship, in which he gives himself to others, his ideals of harmonious equilibrium, justice, mutuality, equality by which he creates a balance of the two opposites, are really an attempt inevitably predetermined in its lines to solve the original problem of Nature, the very problem of Life itself, by the *resolution of the conflict between the two opposites which present themselves in the very foundations of Life in Matter*" (italics ours). The resolution is attempted by the higher principle of Mind, but Mind in its nature being a separative consciousness cannot solve this problem within its own borders, and the harmony has to be sought in a Power still beyond Mind. "Indeed, the end of the road, the goal itself can only be reached by Mind passing beyond itself into that which is beyond Mind, since of That the Mind is only an inferior term and an instrument, first for descent into form and individuality and secondly for reascension into that reality which the form embodies and the individuality represents. Therefore the perfect solution of the problem of Life is not likely to be realised by association, interchange and accomodations of love alone or through the law of the mind and the heart alone. It must come by a fourth status of life in which the eternal unity of the many is realised through the spirit, and conscious foundation of all the operations of life is laid no longer in the divisions of body, nor in the passions and hungers of the vitality, nor in the groupings and the imperfect harmonies of the mind, nor in a combination of all these, but in the unity and freedom of the Spirit."

When we look at the problem of human relations—whether between individual and individual, or between individual and aggregate—we thus come to see that in order to solve them integrally "we must arrive at a conscious unity with our fellow-beings and not merely at the sympathy created by love or the understanding created by mental knowledge, which will always be the knowledge of their superficial existence and therefore imperfect in itself and subject to denial and frustration by the uprush of the unknown and unmastered from the subconscient or the subliminal in them and us. But this conscious oneness can only be established by entering into that in which we are one with them, the universal, and the fullness of the universal exists consciously only in that which is superconscient to us, in the Supermind.... The lower conscious nature is bound down to ego in all its activities, chained triply to the stake of differentiated individuality. The Supermind alone commands unity in diversity." Therefore the emergence of the Supermind in the terrestrial manifestation as the next phase of evolution can alone solve the problems of human relalions.

VI. The Message of Divine Humanism

We thus come to the inevitable conclusion that the true solution for the problem of harmony can intervene and human relations can be based on a secure and perfect basis, only if we transfer the roots of our relations from the mind

life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind. All relations must be founded on a spiritual intimacy, created in and around the Divine. "The solution lies not in the reason but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order. It is a spiritual, a greater than the rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discords. A deeper brotherhood, a yet unfounded law of love is the only sure foundation possible for a perfect social evolution, no other can replace it. But this brotherhood and love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason ...Nor will it found itself in the natural heart of man where there are plenty of other passions to combat it. It is in the soul that it must find its roots."[1]

Only when the individual discovers his secret Self which is at the same time the Self of all, when he sees the Divine not only in himself but in all others, can true unity between man and man be realised on earth. "For so only can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in each man found itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in the race; for the Spirit, the inmost Self, the universal Godhead in every being is that whose very nature of diverse oneness it is to realise the perfection of its individual life and nature in the existence of all, in the universal life and nature."[2]

But does this not seem to be a solution that appears too remote, too chimerical and thus puts off the consummation of a better human society to a far-off date in the future evolution of the race ? For it means that an inner change is needed in the very basis of human nature, a change apparently too difficult to be effected or even attempted except by the rare few. But, if Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary interpretation of world-existence is correct, and if the total emergence of Sachchidananda in manifested nature is the ultimate goal of this evolution, then *nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*.[3] "In any case, if this is not the solution, then there is no solution, if this is not the way, then there is no way for the human kind. Then the terrestrial evolution must pass beyond man as it has passed beyond the animal and a greater race must come that will be capable of the spiritual change, a form of life must be born that is nearer to the divine."[4]

But man need not be pessimistic about his fate. For, as Sri Aurobindo assures us, the destiny of man is to consciously cooperate with the secret nisus of evolution and thus to transmute his own texture and stature into the splendid harmony of a divine manhood.

Such is then the glorious message of divine humanism that Sri Aurobindo offers to modern man perplexed and frustrated with manifold ills of human relations. But Sri Aurobindo is not content only with offering this message,

[1] & [2] Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, pp. 273-274.
[3] "There is no other way to the goal".
[4] Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 274.

for he is not a mere philosopher in the Western sense of the term : he is, above all, the Mahayogi, the supreme Architect of this great divine birth whose advent he has heralded in no uncertain terms in his own personal life. In fact, he has built up a new system of Yoga, the Supramental Yoga, and chalked out ways and means by following which every individual man of our age can realise in his own life and in his communal living the marvellous possibilities that already lie latent in him,—of course, if he chooses to do so and prepares to pay the necessary price in patience, perseverance, but, above all, in sincerity.

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

Blue Sparks

"A well-formed illumined thought can be seen as a spark of Light."
SRI AUROBINDO

Consciousness is the Father of Supermind. Delight is his Mother. We are the children of that Child. He takes us back to his Parents.

* *

Lose all things in the Ignorance; find all things in the Knowledge. That is the secret of the divine life.

* *

Abandon all things in the ego; possess all things in the Self. That is the law of divine living.

* *

Self-possession is the only sure possession; all others are transient and insecure.

* *

Self-possession is the only possession with freedom and mastery; all others possess the possessor.

* *

Possess all things in Self; else all things will possess you.

* *

No attachment; only His Will.
No preference; only His choice.

No desire; only His Delight.
No bondage; only His embrace.

* *

Liberty = Law of Truth.
Freedom = Compulsion of Self.
Right = Service of the Lord.
Choice = Obedience to His Will.

* *

Soak all things in the Water of Silence.
Expose all things in the Light of the Sun.
Burn all things in the Fire of Agni.
Drench all things in the Honey of Ananda.
That is the alchemy of self-transmutation.

* *

Turn inside out and upside down. That is the only way of liberation and self-renewal.

* *

Don't be out-pulled and down-dragged. Be in-drawn and up-turned. That is the secret of self-poise.

* *

Grace is the magic that breaks all bonds of Karma.
Prayer is the key that turns that magic in action.

* *

My strength is in my faith in His omnipotence.

* *

If you do not shape yourself according to your will, you will be shaped by innumerable other wills pressing on you from outside. Make your choice before it is too late.

* *

If your heart is torn with contradictions, blame not yourself for it. It is only Nature pulling you from several directions. It is Her play for His purpose.

* *

Privacy ? It is the greatest illusion of man. He can shut himself off from visible eyes, but how can he guard himself from so many invisible eyes constantly watching him ? His own being has several beings in it of whom he is not aware but who observe his least little thoughts and movements. And innumerable entities in the endless tiers of the cosmos gaze on him when he thinks he is all alone. And God is the greatest spy; who can escape His Eye ?

* *

In His embrace untie all the knots of your garments without any scruple.

* *

The most difficult thing to give to God is one's weaknesses and defects. One wants to present a good face to Him as one does before others. This is due to both vanity and shame. Unless one can stand naked before God in all humility but without shame or fear, one keeps a dark veil between oneself and Him and prevents His Grace from entering that very part of one's being where its redeeming action is most needed.

Fear Him not; have no shame or guilt before His eyes; do not try to be a saint before Him. Expose yourself utterly to Him as to a most intimate friend. Then His Love will well out to you and His Grace will cleanse you utterly and He will fill you with the ecstasy of His close embrace.

* *

Imagination is often nearer to Truth than reason. Truth often finds an easier entrance through the open doors of dreamy imagination than through the guarded gates of scrutinizing reason. The ray of Light is more swiftly seized by the free eye of imagination than by the bespectacled look of logical mind.

* *

If the hypothesis of the transformation of the earthly existence seems illusory to the Illusionists, the concrete evidence of it staring them in the face when the Divine Body manifests on earth will make them finally admit that their Illusionism was itself an illusion. The Supermind will convince them of the divine reality of the universe and of the possibility of divine life on earth by its actual performance if not by its promise.

NEEL PRAKASH

"The Viziers of Bassora" as a Romantic Comedy

I

MAN is a curious amalgam of at least two apparently discordant elements —a Life-Force aiming at full and free expression of its energies and impulsions and an inert Matter with its bondage to the obscure forces of the nether subcon scient and the blind mechanically repetitive brute force of the inconscient. In man's individual and collective consciousness, the Life-Force is normally subject to the tyranny of Matter at every step in its attempt to express itself in this world. A recognition of the limits of the possibilities of the energies of life and a balanced adjustment to the environment and established conditions is the wisdom of commonsense—that uncommon faculty evolved by the human mind in its attempt to negotiate with material nature. To expose the stupidity and incongruity of any fantastic attempt to deviate from the norm of society (and thereby dissolve it in satirical laughter) is precisely the purpose of the very constructive and critical Classical Comedy. But man has always been an adventurer and the creative urge in him has always been exploring new ways of being happy by manifesting the hidden and deeper resources of the Life-Force which can control and even shape Matter and make it a fit instrument for its play. All genuine romance is the product of the realisation of these deeper powers of Life and their dynamism. Perhaps the greatest of all the powers of Life is Love which liberates all the hidden springs of harmony and heals the most bitter wounds in the struggle of forces and beings in this harsh world. It is inevitable then that in the wake of such puissant love all forces of disharmony should get dissolved in the end and the issue must be a better and happy state which points forward to an endless progression in harmony, for there is endless growth in levels and intensities of love. And the play of love has its own varieties of pleasant incongruities and in its background the spectacle of the hypocrite who pretends to have realised the ideal while his actual life is all the time contradicting his wise words of wisdom is pitiably ludicrous. The laughter becomes hilarious, sensuous and even sensual and rollicking if the vital-physical is the centre of the play. And 'music is the food of love' and song is the natural medium of all the deeper feelings of life. Love, laughter and song are the warp and woof of the Romantic Comedy and the interpretative vision of the dramatist reveals itself in and through them. The basic sensibility for appreciation of

this kind of literature is the power of response to this atmosphere free from the cerebral condescending air or the matter-of-fact physical mind or the puritan temperament.

II

"The Viziers of Bassora" depicts the education and fate of two radically opposite temperaments with basically different orientations of the energies of life. We have the type made in God's image and growing more and more in that image of Love, Light and Grace and its exact opposite which has become the young baboon and threatens to develop into a 'brutish amalgam of gorilla and Barbary ape'. These are the bright and dark natures : "...every good kindly man is like the moon and carries a halo, while a chill cloud moves with dark and malignant natures. When we are near them, we feel it." This contrast is clearly worked out among the wild youths (Nureddene and Fareed), the old Viziers (Ibn Sawy and Almuene) and the rulers (Haroun and Alzayni).

Straight and dainty Nureddene is at first a handsome roisterer "hawking, questing for doves, white doves, specialising in the taste of different wines and qualities of girls for these are sciences/ And should be learned by sober masculine graduates !" And his explanation is that he only ranges abroad and learns of manners and of men to fit himself for the after-time ! He grows in an atmosphere of indulgent love and affection of which he is only too confidently aware and therefore could be logically impudent even before his parents. He easily sees through their 'hypocritical' and mock-serious attempts at chastisement, and father and son could have a hilarious rehearsal of the old comedy of "The tyrant father and his graceless son" ! And the parents, though naturally anxious about his future, never lose hope because they look upon these impetuosities as the first wild stirrings of a bold generous nature, and the broker, Muazzim, speaks for all when he observes :

> The son repeats the father,
> But with a dash of quicker, wilder blood,

and in the words of his father :

> The rascal's frank enough, that is one comfort;
> He adds no meaner vices, fear or lying,
> To his impetuous faults. The blood is good
> And in the end will bear him through. There's hope.

But the backward glance at Anice has already made him look upon his life of dissipation as only an episode, and dream of a glorious future when he would

be a chivalrous and adventurous knight and very like the Caliph "an unseen Providence to all mankind" spreading the message of Islam.

The experience of love brings about a progressive chastening of his temperament and releases the noble virtues and gives them their full play. This new birth begins with his frank confession to Anice :

> But I have wandered by the way and staled
> The freshness of delight with gadding pleasures,
> Anticipated Love's perfect fruit with sour
> And random berries void of real savour.
> Oh fool ! had I but known ! What can I say
> But once more that I have deserved you not,
> Who yet must take you, knowing my undesert,
> Whatever come hereafter.

The old impetuosity manifests indeed in his folly of squandering all his wealth to his creditors because his lady would not smile at him unless the bills are paid but it is accompanied with the readiness to follow her if beggary were her price and followed again by his second confession :

> .....it was with myself
> I was angry, but the coward in me turned
> On you to avenge its pain.

His one desire is to be more and more godlike and therefore be worthy of the goddess in the woman. And so he would not hate mankind as did Timon because his friends failed him when he needed their help most :

> What next ? Shall I, like him of Athens, change
> And hate my kind ? Then should I hate myself,
> Who ne'er had known their faults, if my own sins
> Pursued me not like most unnatural hounds
> Into their screened and evil parts of nature.
> God made them; what He made, is doubtless good.

And he could forgive the chief architect of his ruin, Ajebe :

> Anice, my own sins are
> So heavy, not to forgive his lesser vileness
> Would leave me without hope of heavenly pardon.

This is the dawn of the religious consciousness which believes that the presiding force of the universe is Allah, the Supreme, whose mercy alone can

pardon the sins of man. Nureddene is born again and henceforward his love for the lady is blended with his religious feeling. Ends and means for him must be balanced. Straight dealing is best and he knows and is made to realise in his own life (when he is prevailed upon to pretend to sell his lady to Ajebe and Almuene intrudes) that :

> One fine, pure seeming falsehood,
> Admitted, opens door to all his naked
> And leprous family; in, in, they throng
> And brood the house quite full.

He leaves Almuene free to lie in his gutter when the villain begs Anice's pardon. Quite naturally he feels that he should go to Bagdad :

> Let me absolve these debts,
> Then straight with Anice to Bagdad the splendid,
> There is the home for hearts and brains and hands
> Not in this petty centre. Core of Islam,
> Bagdad, the flood to which all brooks converge.

He indulges himself to oblige his lady in one night of revelry and fooling with the hypocrite in the garden but when the disguised Caliph comes as the fisherman he answers :

> I am a man chastised
> For my own errors, yet unjustly. Justice
> I seek from the great Caliph.

When the fisherman asks the slave as the gift he feels entrapped but keeps his oath because he has sworn by the Prophet :

> Another time
> I would have slain thee. But now I feel 'tis God,
> Has snared my feet with dire calamities,
> And have no courage.

And this parting is only a punishment for his sins by the avenging angel :

> Angel of God,
> Avenging angel, wert thou lying in wait for me
> In Bagdad ?

He decides to "go play / At pitch and toss with death in Bassora" taking the script given by the disguised caliph :

I know not who thou art, nor if this scrap
Of paper has the power thou babblest of,
And do not greatly care. Life without her
Is not to be thought of. Yet thou giv'st me something
I'ld once have dared call hope. She will be safe ?

The force that now drives him is no vital feeling for that is paralysed completely but the drive of the religious consciousness which believes all that happens is the Will of God. So he could declare when imprisoned in his uncle's house :

We sin our pleasant sins and then refrain
And think that God's deceived. He waits His time
And when we walk the clean and polished road
He trips us with the mire our shoes yet keep,
The pleasant mud we walked before. All ills
I will bear patiently,

and at the sight of his father in the scaffold :

Justice
Of God, thou spar'st me nothing. Father ! Father !

When his father advises him :

Bow to the will of God, my son ; if thou
Must perish on a false and hateful charge,
A crime in thee impossible, believe
It is His justice still,

he replies :

I will believe it,

and when everything turns to his complete satisfaction :

It is the second toss, that tells, the first
Was a pure foul. I thank Thee, who hast only
Shown me the edge of thy chastising sword,
Then pardoned.

When Anice is restored to him as the gift of the Caliph he says :

Life is my own again and all I love.
Great are thy mercies, O Omnipotent !

The vital has begun to take interest in life and the religious heart and the vital become one again and so he cannot pronounce the villain's doom for that is not his nature. His early hilarious laughter gives place to a chastened humour :

> Doonya, it is not Fairyland.
> Ajebe our treasurer.
> We'll have Shaik Ibrahim for Lord High Humbug
> Of all our faeryland ; shall we not, Anice ?
>
> Your Sultan, mother, as I ever was.

The personality of Fareed is a contrast in every respect to that of Nureddene. He has such a wicked hump to walk about with, that the girls jeer at him. He is 'a misformed urchin full of budding evil and ranges the city like a ruffian, shielded under his father's formidable name'. He 'roars half-devil abroad and never was such a scandal allowed until now in any Moslem town'. The father has indulged the boy till he has lost the likeness even of manhood.

> .....God's great stamp
> And heavenly image on his mint's defaced,
> Rubbed out, and only the brute metal left
> Which never shall find currency again
> Among his angles.

And so we find him throughout the play jumping and gyrating, always in a state of excitement which is quite inhuman and prompted by the basest passions of lust, anger and hatred. His good mother is naturally ashamed of his conduct and scolds him and sometimes even beats him, of course when his father is out. So he wants his father to break her teeth and he shall so laugh ! And his father, indeed prompts him to hate his mother who warns her husband :

> .....but do not lightly think
> The devil you strive to raise up from that hell
> Which lurks within us all, sealed commonly
> By human shame and Allah's supreme grace,—
> But you ! you scrape away the seal, would take
> The full flame of the inferno, not the gusts
> Of smoke jet out in ordinary men ;—
> Think not this imp will limit with his mother
> Unnatural revolt ! You will repent this.

But his father would not take warning for he is mightily pleased with his son precisely because he is what he is :

My amorous wagtail ! What, my pretty hunchback,
.....
.....Ay, you have broken seals ?
You have picked locks, my burglar ?

Both have no conception of love and have no need for it at all in their lives, and life is a field for the satisfaction of the passions with power as the means. Thus Farced believes, "She'll be my slavegirl and she'll have to love me." Marriage is an opportunity and means for the gratification of lust for the woman and hatred for the father of the lady :

I hate him too
And partly for that cause will marry her,
To beat her twice a day and let him know it.
He will be grieved to the heart.

And then she's such a nice tame pretty thing,
Will sob and tremble, kiss me when she's told,
Not like my mother, frown, scold, nag all day.

The father recognises his own lad in all this and wants him to be lusty and breed grandsons like him for his stock !

He acts indeed like a hobgoblin of lust and anger in the slave market and makes his exit in rage followed by his father. Ibn Sawy would never consent to marry his niece to this baboon and she would throw herself from the high window of their house to the court if that proposition is contemplated.

But the horror of it all is that the son is incapable of feeling any affection for his father even. For him all men are only tools for the satisfaction of the basic appetites and when they cease to be so or resist in the least to be so, they have to be removed ruthlessly even by poison. Hence his attempt to poison his father because he was struck and refused the money he wanted immediately. Even Almuene has a horrible surprise, 'beneath whose shock' he staggers. The last act in his life is his attempt to storm the house of Doonya and take her by force and he meets his doom lunged through the body by the Turk. The consuming fire of lust has burnt him body and soul, leaving his mother to cry in agony :

.....My gracious, laughing babe,
Who clung about me with his little hands
And sucked my breasts ! Him you have murdered, Vizier,
Both soul and body. I will go and pray
For vengeance on thee for my slaughtered child.

III

A dark and dangerous mind is Almuene's. There are parts in him that well deserve the favour he enjoys with the king but he uses it all to further his odious designs of tyranny with acute personal malice. All Bassora and half the court complain of his tyrannies and almost everyone in the state cannot consider him as a human being but must use words like 'brutish amalgam of gorilla and Barbary ape', 'Iblis straight out of hell with his hobgoblin', 'Dog's son, dog's father, and thyself a dog. / Thy birth was where thy end shall be, a dunghill' etc., etc., to describe him. The excitement of imperial power and its ruthless exercise is his joy in life and all values and the pursuers of values become his enemies. He naturally wishes to see the ruin of his good brother who baulks him everywhere. The injunctions of the Prophet and Islam that all men are equal underneath the king have no meaning for him and he feels an arrogant claim as an Arab and a Vizier and chides the Turk for being just. And so he would underbid in the slavemarket and even force the broker and carry the slave against all fair play and decency. He engineers the week Ajebe by alternate threats and promises of honour to ruin Nureddene, drench all his senses in vile profligacy, not mere gallantries but gutter filth. He is a downright coward who will beg his brother's pardon in the market and even Anice's pardon to save his life and will lie to get Nureddene punished by the king. He hates his wife because she is good and seems to have no need for affection or love at all in his life, for his pleasure is in trapping his enemies by foul means and gloat when they suffer, as he does when Nureddene is his prisoner. His trust in these means is so great that he wonders why even the Caliph should live when there are swords and poisons. Perhaps the only passionate attachment in his life is for his son in whose lustiness and crookedness he finds an exact image of himself. The education of his son is of the greatest interest to him and his principles of education are summed up in his soliloquy at the end of the second scene of Act I. Indulgence in nature's ways and not an attempt to control the impulses by the ethical will is the way and the end is to produce lusty Samsons who will extend the imperial sway for "nature is your grand imperialist, no moral sermoniser". So he helps to nurture what nature has endowed his son with, a natural opening to the nether forces of evil, and finally has the horrible surprise when the son tries to poison him. Even then he believes in his theory and proceeds to gratify his son's wishes only to be rudely shocked at the murder of his son which makes him rage and wish that the murderer had a son whom he could revenge. His cleverness never deserts him and he almost traps Nureddene by saying :

> I did according to my blood and nurture,
> Do thou as much.

The best defence of villainy and the cleverest piece of escape from a dreadful situation ! And so he would have escaped had not the Caliph pronounced his immediate doom.

Ibn Sawy is the good Vizier with a mature religious mind because of whose presence Bassora is bright. The merchants believe that 'there will be good sales' on the day 'since his feet have trod here'. His mind is steeped in the tenets of Islam and inspires his actions every moment of his life. Thus he bids the proper price for the slavegirl though the broker is prepared to give her as a gift to him. He will give his niece in marriage to the Turk because there is no stock in Islam except the Prophet. And he tells his brother squarely when the arrogant villain insists on superiority of race and rank :

> These are maxims, brother,
> Unsuited to our Moslem polity.
> They savour of barbarous Europe. But in Islam
> All men are equal underneath the King.

He feels that there was never such a scandal as Fareed's devilish conduct allowed in any Moslem town and it should not walk unquestioned in Bassora or any seat of culture. He respects the king though he is not quite happy at his conduct and even goes to buy a slave for him because,

> ...princes must have sweet and pleasant things
> To ease their labours more than common men.
> Their labour is not common who are here
> The Almighty's burdened high vicegerents charged
> With difficult justice and calm-visaged rule.

How much the religion of Islam with its insistence on the acceptance of and submission to the Will of God has entered into the marrow of his being becomes clear to us when we see his resignation in the face of the worst calamities. Thus he could tell his son who is about to be executed, "Bow to the will of God". On this bedrock of unshakable faith in the Justice and Will of God is his life based and it is in that image that he tries to develop and shape himself. He is fair even to his worst enemy Almuene, admitting very generously the parts in him that well deserve the favour he enjoys, and welcomes at the end his brother's wife to his house. And all this goodness is not of the stoical, austere, puritan kind which is good because it is one's duty or mandate from above to be good and kind. It is the spontaneous expression of a noble soul and good heart. We see this in his overflowing affection for the members of his family and particularly for his vagabond son. In fact he seems to err only on the other side in being indulgent

in his kindness to the point of being weak and helpless in administering chastisement which he feels to be necessary because otherwise his son's soul will get corrupted. Not that he doubts the basic nobility of his son. But when he does feel a corrective is necessary he can never summon the will-power to rise to the occasion. So he takes his wife to task for spoiling her son by always intervening when he wants to be severe ! Even his most determined attempt to be serious ends as roaring farce—the rehearsal of the old comedy of 'The tyrant father and his graceless son' ! Perhaps that is the central weakness of his character—lack of a powerful outgoing will which will invest him with a power greater than evil. He could be only a passive spectator of the misrule of Bassora by the scheming villain and the obliging king and could only give the advice of prudent silence to Murad. Just he is, but powerful he is not. A faithful and sincere instrument he could be, but not an orginating force.

IV

To be just and mighty is the special gift of Haroun al Rasheed, the Caliph whose name has acquired a magical halo and mythical significance around it. The young lovers look forward to meet him in one of his zealous rounds of detecting crimes by working in disguise, for he is the unseen Providence ever alert in punishing the wicked and promoting love and goodness in this world. In his own words:

> This is the thing that does my heart most good
> To watch these kind and happy looks and know
> Myself for cause. Therefore, I sit enthroned,
> Allah's vicegerent, to put down all evil
> And pluck the virtuous out of danger's hand.
> Fit work for Kings ! not merely the high crown
> And marching armies and superber ease.

Thus his watchful eye suspects mischief in the garden kept by Ibrahim and he promptly disguises himself as a fisherman and presents himself in the garden fulfilling the dream of the lovers. He is terrible to the wicked but loving and generous to the good who recognise in him their friend and appeal confidently and courageously, even threateningly—compare Anice's indignation in Act V at the delay of justice—and receive redress for their wrongs. He has a very fine sense of humour and can appreciate it even when directed against him. He enjoys the fisherman's remark at his happiness in seeing that the Caliph is taking a holiday from kingcraft to pursue an honest man's profession, and again Ibrahim's statement that Allah will find it a hard task even if he thinks of saving the Caliph's soul. There is nothing mystical in him or for that matter in Ibn Sawy. Both are

persons of considerable mental maturity with a profound sense of vocation and religious faith in the Will of God and the principles of Islam. The Caliph is deeply humble and advises the young lovers the need for that virtue for one's own salvation :

> Fair children worthy of each other's love
> And beauty ! till the Sunderer comes who parts
> All wedded hands, take your delights on earth,
> And afterwards in heaven. Meanwhile remember
> That life is grave and earnest under its smiles,
> And we too with a wary gaiety
> Should walk its roads, praying that if we stumble,
> The All-Merciful may bear our footing up
> In His strong hand, showing the Father's face
> And not the stern and dreadful Judge.

To be God's image on earth is his aim, the earthly king to be a reflection of the heavenly King.

King Alzayni is by contrast of the earth, earthy, spending his life in indulgence and profligacy, leaving the country to be tyrannized by a villainous schemer and absolutely callous about the welfare of the people, and finally treacherous to his liegelord. No wonder that the state of Bassora is the battleground for forces of good and evil with the latter gaining ground with increasing intensity.

Love is born in this world of conflict (Bassora) and naturally gravitates to the world of Harmony and Power—Bagdad, the Core of Islam and the seat and source of Justice. Then it becomes a nexus or instrument for the establishment of Justice in the world of conflict. The young lovers become the lever of action for the Caliph. Love invokes a Power greater than Evil to intervene in a world of darkness and evil and that Power responds and even rushes with all its puissance to restore the broken society and give it a new birth in love and maturity. From Bassora to Bagdad and back again to Bassora with the power of purification and chastisement—that is the movement of the play. And the presence of the earthy hypocrite, Ibrahim, gives this Bagdad sufficient reality and stability.

V

To inspire love by their beauty of form and character in those who are capable of it is the great privilege of the women in the play who are all of them made in God's image and grow increasingly in that image. The love they bestow on men and on each other draws out the best in all and acts for harmony, sweetness and light. But this passive radiation of love is not all their part in the comedy. They

are gifted with an unfailing insight into the characters of men and the disposition and probable turn of events and those who could trust them are happy indeed, while those who flout them do come to ruin. Such are the insights of the mothers about the future of their sons. Sometimes indeed they act on the strength of their insight and give the action of the plot a decisive turn and help the men transform their lives. They become then the architect of fate. Such is the action of Doonya when she gives out a lie that the Persian is meant for Nureddene by his parents, meant as a surprise, for she sees that the vagrancy of the youth will stop the moment he discovers love. Similar is the suggestion of Anice to Nureddene that they shall sail to Bagdad and meet the Caliph. But very often they combine with the wisdom of emotional and imaginative insight a very shrewd prudence and practical commonsense. Such is Ameena's utterance to her husband when he is in a fix as to what he should or indeed could do after his son's claiming the slave meant for the king. They can act with courage in a crisis and hasten the resolution. So does Anice when she gets angry with the Caliph reminding him of a Being greater than himself in whose eyes he would be accused by her on doomsday. They can endure with patience the knocks of adverse fate and give their all for love. And these qualities go with their characteristic sentiments and dependence on men for their love which of course is the very centre of their lives and so they remain quite human and the eternal paradox and the perennial source of inspiration for man. Compare the relationship between Ajebe and Balkis in particular. Again their robust optimism and essential cheerfulness of outlook on life living in the present with full trust in the power of the life-force to disentangle the complications it has got into, are contagious and help ease the gloom and murky darkness of life. They can laugh at the incongruities of life and make the men laugh with them and become sane and wise.

VI

Doonya is the embodiment of the very spirit of laughter. She is not only humorous in herself but the cause of humour in others. She is in the deepest part of her being a confirmed romantic but has also developed in her a thorough-going realist and she could pass from the one to the other with extraordinary agility and detachment and look at the one in the background of the other. Add to this her interest in seeing life as much as living it. That is perhaps the secret of her humour. Thus when Nureddene is elaborating his romantic dream of conquest and knight-errantry saying that 'everywhere I would catch danger by the throat where I can find him', she completes,

> **Butcher blood-belching dragons with my blade,**
> **Cut ogres, chop giants, tickle cormorants,**

and she would have him call the land which he has not settled for his marriage, Cumcatchia or Nonsensicum and she makes her suit from now to the Caliph of the Fairyland 'from Bassora to the distant moon'. When the dream comes true she would insist on seeing it as a faery land :

> It is, it is, and Anice here its queen.
> A faery King of Faery Bassora,
> Do make a General of my general nuisance.
> I long to be my lady Generaless
> Of faery land, and ride about and charge
> At thorns and thistles with a charming-stick,
> With Balkis and Mymoona for my Captains —
> They're very martial, King, bold swashing fighters !

Her lie that Anice is meant as a surprise is 'No falsehood, mere excess of truth, a bold anticipation of the future'—for is not the mother surprised now ! She has only been 'quite virtuously disobedient and feels almost a long white beard upon her chin' because 'the thing is so wise and sober'. Her imagination is always itching to contrive situations of incongruity. Thus she tells of Anice :

> I wish my cousin Nureddene had come
> And caught you here. What fun it would have been !

And she feels so happy that there shall be a gentle storm because she has told Nuzhath to call mother here to see and chide the happy couple and outlines to them the prospects :

> You'll be whipped,
> Anice, and Nureddene packed off to Mecca
> On penitential legs : I shall be married.

She enjoys the sight of the eunuch sentinel snoring while sleeping and declaring on waking that he was only meditating on a text of Koran with closed eyes. She could also exploit the incongruities in the characters of men and women and thus she enjoys tickling Ameena and Ibn Sawy who only calls her "my little satirist".

The whole family lives in an atmosphere of pure love and that makes the humour possible and enjoyable. Love in its initial stages is indeed a very serious affair and, till the union of the consciousness takes place, continues to be that serious. But once united they would like to be separate in order that they might play with each other in the background of the feeling of union. They would even play at being serious and that is the greatest delight and seal of true vital love. We

have the best example of it in the relationship between the father and the son. See the rehearsal of 'The old comedy of the tyrant father and his graceless son' and the son's logic of impudence explaining his vagrancy. Quite similar in its origin is the humour in the scenes where the weak and sentimental lover Ajebe feels helplessly his slave Balkis playing upon him as upon her lute, and where each complains of the other in universal general statements to Mymoona who helps to

> Join two hands that much desire
> And would have met ere this but for their owners,
> Who have less sense than they.

Anice's wit shines by contrast with these. Compare her reply to the Caliph who Wishes that 'Allah give Nureddene a beard! for he is a generous youth' : "fisherman, what a losing blessing is this, to kill the thing for which thou blessest him ! If Allah give him a beard, he will be no longer a youth, and for the generosity, it will be Allah's."

And we have the most fantastic merriment and hilarious laughter in the fooling of the hypocrite, Ibrahim, with his fondness for learned words which do not mean much, his self-importance, his profession of high mystical wisdom and practice of sensuality, his repetition of the name of the Lord which becomes a convenient cover for his secret contemplation of the flesh. And he gets drunk to boot and cries, "I will sing : there is no voice like mine in Bagdad."

The songs on Ibrahim by himself, Nureddene and Anice are a blending of humour and pathos at his sensuality in white-haired age and life of frustrated passions. They evoke the feelings of pity and laughter at even the unrepenting hypocrite. But the songs of Anice and her strange tale to Nureddene have a profound significance and may be said to sum up and crystallise the dramatic idea of the play by their tones and overtones. All of them emerge in situations of intense feeling and emotional exaltation when the speaker is liberated from the bondage of her cramping personal self, and voice some great universal idea whose full value even she may not have realised at the moment. Their themes are Love, Life and God. Man grows in the divine image only by love :

> King of my heart, wilt thou adore me,
> Call me goddess, call me thine ?
> I too will bow myself before thee
> As in a shrine.
> Till we with mutual adoration
> And holy earth defeating passion
> Do really grow divine.

All the bright natures in the drama—Nureddene, Ajebe, the ladies, Ibn Sawy and the Caliph—seem to have an intuition of this great secret to which they give themselves completely and therefore get their petty human egos dissolved in either the vital love for the other sex or the mental love of God in the pursuit of the religion of Islam. All the dark natures—Fareed, Almuene etc., pursue the path of lust and power and cruelty and perish in their flames. But this growth has to take place in the field of life in this harsh world and therefore fraught with pain. So the human heart which is in love with a life of love must never forget that the very nature of life in this world where it is imprisoned in matter is pain and must endure with patience the wrongs of the world :

Heart of mine, O heart impatient,
Thou must learn to wait and weep.
Wherefore wouldst thou go on beating
When I bade thee hush and sleep ?
Thou who wert of life so fain,
Didst thou know not, life was pain ?

The patient resignation to the Will of God, of Nureddene and Ibn Sway in the most agonising crises of their lives flashes in the mind of the sensitive reader. To wait in a trance of silence with a quiet prayer to the Almighty is the secret. And this belief invests the mortal with a courage to rise against the great earthly potentates and they have to quail :

The Emperor of Roum is great;
The Caliph has a mighty State;
But One is greater, to Whom all prayers take wing;
And I, a poor and weeping slave,
When the world rises from its grave,
Shall stand up the accuser of my King.

Allah hu Akbar !

But human nature cannot bear very much reality and so the human heart is always trembling in the wake of a glimpse of Love and wonders if so bright a thing would accommodate itself to the dolour which is the daily ware of man on earth. Can Light coexist with darkness ? The Light may recede and withdraw to its heights leaving the aspiring mortal in tears at the departure of love—tears which reveal that love has come and gone and therefore remain as a memory which will kindle a love for the love :

Love keep terms with tears and sorrow ?
He's too bright.
Born today, he may tomorrow
Say good night.

Love is gone ere grief can find him;
But his way
Tears that falling lag behind him
Still betray.

But how do the majority of mortals respond to the advent of Love, the unearthly gem and dower ? That is revealed by the tale of Anice : It was about/ A man who had a gem earth could not buy./ He kept it/ With ordinary jewels which he took/ Each day and threw into the street, and said,/ "I'll show this earth that all the gems it has,/ Together match not this I'll solely keep./ Ah, but he did not know/ What slender thread bound to a common pearl/ That wonder. When he threw that out, alas !/ His jewel followed, and though he sought earth through,/ He never could again get back his gem.

When love comes to man, his ego gets inflated in the very possession and experience of it and makes a demonstration of this pride of possession by egoistic acts of renunciation of other earthly possessions and this very effort leads to the irretrievable loss of love. And again man values the gifts of love more than love itself and very often these gifts are the reactions of the senses to the extraordinary experience—the quite earthly feelings of pleasure though prompted by an unearthly gift—common jewels. Love is therefore bound by a slender thread to the pleasures induced by it and when these are thrown away in the pride of possession, love also is lost. The pure experience of the joy of love without any sensational reaction and a quiet and passive self-giving to it are rare indeed ! Nureddene becomes that rare bird after hearing the tale.

VII

That the deepest sentiment of the play is concentrated in a song makes the drama quite Shakespearean. Consider as a parallel Feste's song in Twelfth Night during the romping drunken revel at Olivia's house. In fact the play has many affinities with and echoes of Shakespeare. The reference in the rehearsal of the old comedy of 'The tyrant father and his graceless son' is obviously to the fourth scene of the second Act of King Henry IV, Part One, where Falstaff and the Prince play this comedy. Compare especially the Prince's words: "Swearest thou, ungracious boy ? henceforth ne'er look on me. Thou art violently carried away from grace : there is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of a fat old man : a tun of man is thy companion." And we have an actual mention

of 'him (Timon) of Athens' when Nureddene's friends fail him when he needs them most. And we find the enthronement of Women as the queens of comedy in both. The likeness in plot structure—starting from a world of conflict (Bassora, Venice) and moving to a world of Harmony and pastoral Beauty which is sufficiently real (Bagdad, Belmont) and returning back to the old world and resolving the tension there, thanks to the influence of young lovers (Nureddene-Anice, Bassanio-Portia)—is clear enough. The atmosphere in both is redolent with laughter of the most sympathetic kind and lyrical songs celebrating the various moods of love. And above all, the manifestation of a super-abundance of vital energy which floods the speeches and actions of the lively characters. But the resemblance stops there. Shakespeare laughs at all mankind, himself included, because their very essence is a bundle of contradictions, born to desire something they will never get, or that will never satisfy them if they did get it; because they are a mixture of body and soul, each always at odds with the other. Laughter in 'The Viziers' has, as we have seen, quite a different basis. Again Shakespeare started with the Idea of Comedy of the Middle Ages but depleted it of its religious atmosphere. His plays are characterised by the absence of religion. They have more of the Renaissance humanism and zest for life. But 'The Viziers' presents in bold relief characters with a well-defined mental love for God and acceptance of His Will. They could say in the great crises of their lives the great words of Dante : In His Will is our peace (not indeed as a spiritual or mystical realisation but certainly as a positive act of religious, mental faith). And in this respect, the play is in the Dantesque medieval spirit. Dante saw the formula for Comedy—a tale of trouble that turned into joy—as the pattern or picture of ultimate reality. This Romantic Comedy is the declaration of the soul of the creative artist of Faith in the supreme Architect of life and His master-plan of ultimate victory and triumph over Matter.

M. V. SEETARAMAN

The Transcendence of Doctrines

ONE might frame the epigram that we have to transcend doctrines because there are doctrines of transcendence. To explain more precisely: we have the feeling that the way in which truths about a divine Reality are expressed always falls short of the truth, and this is simply because the divine Reality is held to transcend the ordinary observable world—the world in terms of which our concepts are constructed. This shows the inadequacy of metaphysical descriptions. Or as Sri Aurobindo remarks : "Our nature sees things with two eyes always, for it views them doubly as idea and as fact and therefore every concept is incomplete for us and to a part of our nature almost unreal until it becomes an experience".[1]

This points to the fact that doctrines of transcendence have an intimate relation to experience, though not of course to *ordinary* experience. For clearly, ordinary experience is compounded of feelings, perceptions and the like which would not seem to involve any thought of contact with a divine Reality. However, it may be objected that in seeing the stars or my neighbour's face I am really seeing an aspect of the divine. But one must be careful to distinguish between saying that it is appropriate to *interpret* the objects of ordinary experience in this way and saying that it is out of such experience that the concept of a divine Reality is formed. From the point of view of evidence, not all experiences are important. Or, to put the matter another way, all experiences are in some sense experiences of a divine Reality, so that all experiences are equally experiences of God ; but some experiences are more equal than others ! If the divine Reality really did become evident from my glancing at the banana which I am about to eat, how is it that so many have their vision clouded ? How is it that so many people are unbelievers ? It is unrealistic to suppose that common experience has an immediate evidential value regarding the existence of a supernatural Reality.

Yet how is this ? Surely, the divine Being ought to make himself as plain as possible to men. If He does not, then is He not responsible for our ignorance? Likewise it may be objected against the Christian religion that it suggests that God has revealed Himself in an especially obscure manner. And yet, as far as experience goes, one can reply in two ways. First, by pointing out that as a matter of fact in the history of religions it is recognized that the higher experiences are peculiar, strange and rare. The *sākṣātkāra* is not bought at a low price. So to say : this is a pervasive fact about religion. And if one wants to understand the nature of religion, one must grasp this fact. Second, we may

[1] *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 74.

answer by saying that there is a metaphysical reason why the gods delight in that which is obscure. For if the divine Reality is genuinely transcendent, then it cannot be grasped within the phenomenal world. Yet on the other hand, the divine Being, in order to reveal Himself, must burst in upon the world of experience. And thus the divine Being must both hide Himself and reveal Himself at the same time. And yet there is a tension here, and a law of diminishing returns: the more commonplace the higher insight becomes, the less divine does God appear (is this why some of the most naturally religious peoples in the world have been polytheists ?—perhaps this was a necessary stage along the way). There is another tension too. For do we not feel that religion should be "democratic" ? Why should the higher insights be reserved for the few ? Why again should not God reveal Himself to all beings ? This latter tension can be resolved by reflecting that there are differences of degree. Under the guidance of the spiritual geniuses, from Moses and Yajnavalkya onwards, the more ordinary man has the opportunity for limited intimations of the divine Reality. The former tension is resolved through the metaphysical reason we have already noticed, namely that God must reveal Himself infrequently if men are to have a correct impression of His transcendence. From the point of view of experience, the experiences of the Transcendent in their highest forms cannot be like other and commonplace experiences.

It may, however, be objected that along these lines it is most logical to suppose that the divine Reality *never* reveals itself; but in Its glorious and silent transcendence wraps Itself utterly away from the world of creatures. Atheism thus and true religion would coalesce. This would be the ultimate form of *śūnyavāda*. Yet we may note that the *śūnyavāda* itself, in as much as it is a spiritual doctrine, cannot rest at this blank point. Mysteriously, the utter transcendence of thought and speech which leads to Suchness conjures forth from within itself the Tathagata. The Zero somehow projects itself into phenomena. (Not here the problem of the One and the Many, but the problem of the None and the Many !) To save itself as a spiritual doctrine, the Madhyamika dialectic, like that of Dean Mansel and Kierkegaard, gives birth to a concept of the phenomenalized Transcendent. That is, it leads us back to experience. But perhaps this is not entirely unexpected and illogical, in that the Void itself can be experienced. Philosophical argument points us on the way to realization, and *nirvāṇa* and the Void are one. We thus see, from the history of thought, that there is a basic impossibility about a religious atheism. Atheism is possible, yes; but religious atheism, no. For the underlying impulse of religious atheism is that the higher insight defies words and transcends doctrines; yet nevertheless, there is the insight—the experience of the Ineffable. Religious atheism inevitably recognizes the phenomenalization of the divine Reality, and is thus necessarily impelled to *say* something. It must not be content with Non-Being, but must assert something about Being. In short, the Ineffable cannot be the Utterly

Ineffable. Even the Buddha, in his marvellous economy of language and doctrine regarding the goal which is realized through mystical insight, nevertheless said something about the Other Shore.

It follows then that however much we may feel it necessary to repudiate the idea that the web of words effectively traps the higher insights, we are also compelled to say something about them. In virtue of such insights, a doctrinal system has to be propounded. But does this land us back in uncritical dogmatism? And how are we to choose between competing formulations ?

The latter question is too difficult for us to pursue here : it cries out for lengthy and profound treatment. But let us at least try to clarify matters regarding the first question. It is, I suspect, already clear that if it is on the basis of religious insight that the existence of a spiritual realm is affirmed, then we are liberated from any literalistic appeal to scriptures. The scriptures now assume a different and more telling significance. The words themselves are there to signalize and express and communicate the unveiling of the divine Being. We do not, perhaps, go so far as to tear up the Bible or the Veda, as in the famous Zen picture. For the need of scriptures still remains. And why ? Because we are not proud enough to claim to be one of the few to whom the unveiling at a higher level unmistakably occurs. Those few, too, may be receptive to the Higher partly because they have drawn inspiration and wisdom from their forerunners. Nowhere in human knowledge and belief do we start with a vacuum : we are forever groping onwards through an obscurity lit partially from lamps which stand behind us. This brings us to an important point, which is close to the one at which we arrived when we said that that we must say *something* about the higher insights. In our deepening awareness and understanding of the import of the scriptures, we are in a manner transcending them too. We are penetrating beyond the words of men which seek to express a Divine communication. We perform anew the process we learnt as children : for though the child is told about God he can at first only accept the words at their face value, and yet he comes to see that this is not how they are to be understood.

It is similar in regard to religious ritual. At first, the acts are performed in a rigid, even compulsive, manner. The outward performance seems to count for everything. And yet, as too with moral action, there is a flowering forth of ritual and an inner enrichment. A flowering forth, since the concepts of worship and so forth are broadened and enlarged, until they are thought of as permeating daily life : the performance of one's everyday tasks comes to be seen as a way of glorifying, and cooperating with, the divine Being. And an inner enrichment, since the externality of the liturgical act is found to be only the husk : just as we look to the intention in judging of moral action, and not just to what was *done*, so too in liturgy and yoga we pass beyond the prostrations and the postures.

Yet does this mean that the externals are unimportant ? Does it mean that we are beyond any religious obligations and spiritual disciplines ? The answer

must be: No. And for a reason which is similar to that which we used to rebut the notion of Utter Ineffability. However, to consider transcendence in this new context is to penetrate more deeply into its nature.

Mankind has never spoken of or addressed the divine Being in a void; but always, initially at least, within the context of spiritual practice. In speaking of the Transcendent as divine, we are not merely mouthing a commendation (indeed it would be blasphemous and obtuse to do such a thing). Rather, the Transcendent is seen as divine from the bottom of the telescope of worship, awe and sacrifice. However much it may be thought that there are crudities and absurdities in the prayerful and sacrificial approach to the divine Being, it is this approach which, from our point of view, justifies our speaking of the ultimate Reality as divine, as godlike. The man that is shot in battle has become a target; in himself he is (even if he be a professional soldier) more than a target. But his enemy's awareness of him is such that he necessarily appears in this guise. So too the divine Being appears, at least in the first and main instance, as an object of worship. Likewise also, at what may possibly be a higher stage, it is through the yogic approach (whether of Eastern or Western mystics) that the divine Being becomes the Goal which is to be realized. In brief, religious and spiritual disciplines give us the direction in which to look for the divine Being. More basically, they indicate to us the *meaning* of the concepts of Divinity and Reality. They provide us with the framework of language in which we may speak of the transcendent, a language which becomes enriched and corrected through the higher insights of the few. In a very profound sense, ordinary religion and spirituality is educational. Though we have to outgrow our early education, we cannot do without it. Understanding does not spring unfledged from the midst of secular pursuits.

These thoughts may well make us more sympathetic to the very *bizarreness* of religions. Much therein is obscure, desperately strange and even uninviting. But the obscurities, the strangenesses and the repulsions are only so from the point of view of ordinary non-spiritual existence; they are only so from the standpoint of that which is, in a way, ignorance. Again we see that the divine Being must be reflected in the exceptional (and that to which one can sometimes ignorantly take exception !), even if also He is immanent everywhere. The uncanny atmosphere of ritual may happily signalize the otherness and transcendence of the divine Being. Only thus do we manage to have a glimmering of the Spirit concealed, at first sight, by matter.

So far we have been arguing that the transcendence of the more overt meanings of revelations and rituals and disciplines is a necessity, but that also that the existence of that which is to be transcended is likewise a necessity. Without the ground, one cannot leap.

But there is more to be said than this. For transcendence only makes sense in a dialectical manner. The Christian child, for example, who imagines God

in a rather literal way as Father, does not, in his deeper understanding at a later age, come to believe something totally divorced from that literal image. The sacrificer who comes to learn that harmony with the divine Being is more than a matter of appeasement through burnt offerings is discovering something which is not utterly unrelated to his previous thoughts. The yogin who concentrates upon physical and mental disciplines achieves a realization which is not entirely unconnected with those very preparations. One may put these points succinctl y if crudely, by saying that transcendence is only worthwhile and enlightening if it involves transcending something which itself contains a measure of truth, insight or reality.

This may well make us reflect in a broader way upon the nature of the empirical world itself. Although the Advaitin system is marvellous in its simplicity, subtlety and compelling power, and although its majestic insistence upon the sole reality of the Sachchidananda must astonish and impress us, nevertheless there is a way in which it does not sufficiently express transcendence. Although it is true that from the lower standpoint, the divine Reality does transcend the world of *maya*, this 'going beyond' is in a way not radical enough (in another way too radical). For the value implicit in such a transcendence leaks away and evaporates as soon as we contemplate the indeed illusory nature of empirical reality as it is described in the Advaita. In a way, there is nothing for Brahman to transcend. Of course, even the rigid monist has to admit that the illusion exists, and therefore in practice he is compelled to make a distinction of some sort between two spheres. But the ultimate logic of his position involves a denial of genuine transcendence.

It is true that in some respects he has reason on his side. For it may well be thought that the divine Reality must not be considered by reference to the empirical world. I mean this : that if by transcendence we mean a transcending of the empirical world, then transcendence cannot be a property of the divine Reality in Itself. For the existence of the empirical world is in a way accidental. Or more properly, it may be thought to be contingent. One must concede, of course, that some systems of theology make it look as though the emanation of the empirical world has something of a necessary air, as though the divine Reality is compelled by some inner logic to overflow into visibility. But even on such a view, it is possible to conceive of the divine Reality "before" (as it were) such an overflowing. And on the view which stresses the contingency of the world (which surely expresses well the *freedom* of the divine Being), it is clear that the existence of the world is not intrinsic to the situation, that the relationship signified by such terms as "Creator" and therefore "Transcendent" is not essential to the divine nature. On these grounds, the Advaitin appears to have a real justification for his way of speaking.

And yet on the other hand, there are defects in such a view. In the first place, although rightly here is stressed the inner unknowability of God, nevertheless

it is only that which is asserted which makes sense. Do we have to repeat that absolute silence cannot be distinguished from atheism ? We have to accept our cosmic lot, namely that we have to speak of the divine Being in relationship to the world—or, if you like, *through* the world. Again, given that this is so, can we accept the account of the world as illusion, as a cosmic conjuring trick ? I think that the stress on the *purpose* of the world in Judaeo-Christian thought is perhaps excessive, and that this can be nicely counter-balanced by the picture of the cosmic dance. It may even be thought that the latter picture has the tendency to emphasize the importance of empirical reality. For although a dance or a game is considered to be mere entertainment or relaxation, nevertheless a dance or a game is something which we most definitely do for its own sake. The notion of purpose on the one hand brings out that the world must be viewed in relationship to a supracosmic Reality : the picture of the dance brings out on the other hand that the world is chosen, so to speak, for its own sake. But the view that the world is illusory cuts at the root of these thoughts. To put the matter in the perspective of transcendence : just as we have recognized that genuine transcendence of speech or ceremonial is dialectical, and relies upon some inner truth or insight contained already in the words or rites transcended, so too the genuine transcendence of the divine Being is of the same sort. The true doctrine of the transcendence of the divine Reality involves the thought that the cosmos which He or It transcends is itself genuine, and even, in basic essentials, good. (Or perhaps we should just say : good rather than evil, if one *has* to choose between the terms of this opposition—for maybe the opposition is itself wrongly put.)

The conclusion, then, of our argument so far is that the divine Reality genuinely transcends a genuine world.

This conclusion, of course, still leaves open the inner nature of the empirical world. It leaves open the question of how the immanence of the divine Reality is to be expressed, or whether it should be expressed at all. As to the latter possibility, it is sufficient to remark that any notion of divine Causality must bring with it a doctrine of immanence. Thus the real question that remains concerns the way in which this is to be expressed.

What at least is clear now is that the world must be considered in an evolutionary way. Time past is contained within time present. The researches and speculations of biologists and physicists nudge us firmly in the direction of realizing that this cosmos is by no means symmetrical in respect of past and future. It is itself like a growing plant. Thus the divine immanence must be related to this evolutionary picture.

But here we go beyond our remarks concerning the transcendence of doctrines. There is so much more to be said, but it cannot be said just now.

NINIAN SMART

The Metaphysical Poets: a Revaluation

(Continued from the previous Number)

NOW that we have examined in some details some of the major poems of John Donne, the leader of the Metaphysical school of poets, in order to discover the characteristic ways in which the poetic sensibility and art of this school, particularly of Donne, operated, we may fruitfully summarise some of our conclusions in the following way :—

1) Metaphysical poetry of the 17th Century originates from the mind; at any rate, it allows the mind to play the leading rôle in the poetic activity and expression.

2) And yet the Metaphysical mind is closely wedded to the workings of passion and imagination as well.

3) The final outcome of such an amalgam is, therefore, something which can be fittingly called passionate thinking, or emotional ratiocination or imaginative dialectics.

4) The Metaphysical sensibility tends to be eclectic and catholic in its taste and operates, if we accept T.S.Eliot's pronouncement, by a "mechanism... which could devour any kind of experience". The result is a kind of poetry which is often strange and surprising.

5) Its rhythm is one of spoken speech, particularly in Donne's and Herbert's poetry, with the result that it appears as if the Metaphysical poet aims at speaking out, rather than writing, his verses.

6) Its tone and mode of communication are, therefore, dramatic and dynamic; and their impact upon the reader is one of alert intensity.

7) Its style is strange, learned and witty, though at times surprisingly familiar, even prosaic. On the whole, it is a peculiarly delightful compound of academic, even pedantic learning, and popular, current idiom of expression. It is singularly free from the usual poeticisms and hardly admits any kind of flower and ornament in its vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is packed with meaning and often possesses several levels and layers of it.

8) Its imagery is even more strange and witty. It is often deliberately fantastic. Drawn from as many and varied sources as the curious athletic and eclectic mind of the intellectual Metaphysicals dabbled and delighted in, it is a strange and surprising mixture of the abstract and the concrete, the trivial and the solemn,

the familiar and the fantastic, the sacred and the profane, the scholarly and the popular.

9) One of its leading temperamental as well as technical features is the peculiar "wit" or "conceit" with which it treats its subject, whether serious or light, and expresses its attitude towards the world. "Wit", therefore, of its own peculiar "Metaphysical" brand is its characteristic mode of expression and communication, as it is of its vision of reality itself.

10) It is both secular and religious in its themes and, at its best, treats of human as well as Divine relationship or love with equal sincerity, warmth of feeling and acute analytical thinking, hopes and fears, etc.

11) The impact upon it of medieval scholastic philosophy and Ptolemaic astronomy and cosmology is almost on par with that of the "new" Newtonian science and materialistic philosophy and Copernican astronomy and cosmology. But instead of producing any feeling of harmony and synthesis between these different systems of thought and views about the universe, such a multiple but unresolved impact results mostly in tension, stress, strain and conflict in its expression no less than in its feeling, thinking and imagination. In the last analysis, therefore, the Metaphysical poetry remains at best the poetry of a troubled, suffering sensibility, intensely trying to reach some kind of a satisfactorily stable poise and order and harmony, but seldom succeeding in its earnest effort. This is true of even such poets as Herbert and Marvell and Crashaw and Vaughan, though, it is true, there are occasions when they experience moods of peace and harmonious reconciliation. But for Donne such occasions are extremely rare and his is a soul whose poetic expression sheds the most intense light and casts the most moving spell only when it is in a purgatorial stage of its journey. His acute analytical mind, too, makes the greatest appeal when it is engaged not in the cool, luminous exploration of some pure realm of thought but in polemics of some kind or other. It is at its best when it is straining and struggling to come to grips with some object, and not when it is quite at home in it.

We have stressed the large part which the mind plays in this poetry. It will be profitable if we now try to understand a little the precise nature of the kind of 'mind' which operates here. For the 'mind' is an enormously wide and vast region and contains several layers. Of course, it is not quite easy to think of and treat these different layers or chambers of the mind as so many watertight and mutually exclusive compartements. The subtlety of mind lies in the fact that it can operate on more than one level much too quickly and simultaneously to be grasped by our ordinary logic. Also, the various layers or chambers of it are too constantly merging into one another and thus forming ever-new fluid compounds to be tied down by some arbitrary principle or law to any single level of operation. Then again, the no less fluid and subtle and unstably moving vital world of feeling is complexly complicating the mental movements or dynamisms by its constant impact and pressure upon the mind-universe. At

any rate, the Metaphysical poetic sensibility is fusing the mental and vital worlds or movements, the thought with passion, the logical, dialectical wit with feeling or emotion in such a way and to such an extent that it is really difficult to separate the two operations in their poetic process or expression. A thought, to Donne, as Eliot rightly points out, was an experience and modified his sensibility. This meant that Donne's mind did not operate on its own mental level only but emitted a complex incandescence by constantly and instinctively mating with the vital plane of feeling, and the fusion of both gave rise to an imaginative intensity which was too profound or mysterious or subtle and difficult to be reached by sheer mind or passion alone. This, however, happened only when he was at his best. When, for example, Donne said in *The Sunne Rising* that

> Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clyme,
> Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time,

or,

> She is all States, and all Princes, I,
> Nothing else is,

or in *The Good-morrow* that

> What ever dyes, was not mixt euqally;
> If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
> Love so alike, that none due slacken, none can die

or in *The Extasie* that

> Love's mysteries in soules do grow
> But yet the body is his booke

or in his famous sonnet on Death that

> One short sleepe past, we wake eternally

or in the *First Anniversary* that

> And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;

it was not on the pure mental level of thought that his poetic sensibility was operating. On the contrary, all these statements are shot with feeling and passion

more than thought. They are, to be more exact, thought-sensations. He did not need to exclaim in the reverse order of Keats's ejaculation : "O, for a life of thoughts rather than of sensations", for to him the life of thoughts mattered most when they co-existed with the life of sensations at one and the same moment.

To him, therefore, the experience of the pure, sensation-free mind, as experienced, for example, in the following unique lines in Marvell's *Thoughts in a Garden* :

> Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
> Withdraws into its happiness;
> The mind, that ocean where each kind
> Does straight its own resemblance find;
> Yet it creates, transcending these,
> Far other worlds, and other seas;
> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade,

or of the soul as distinct from both the mind and the senses, as revealed in the following lines of the same poem by Marvell in the succeeding stanza :

> Here at the fountain's sliding foot
> Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
> Casting the body's vest aside,
> My soul into the boughs does glide;
> There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
> There whets and combs its silver wings,
> And, till prepared for longer flight,
> Waves in its plumes the various light,

is something quite outside the reach of his poetic sensibility. He could logically analyse and ratiocinatively illuminate and dramatically quicken his vital feeling of love whether human or divine and arrive at certain clear-cut, intellectually formulated conclusions, as we see, with such intense beauty and power and ringing resonance in the *Good morrow*, for example, or *Hymn to God, my God, in my sickness*. But either he did not like or was unable to transcend the sensuous and sensational vital and physical levels of thinking and operate exclusively from the pure or high and abstract but nevertheless vivid, region of the mind, as found in the Marvell passage above.

And it is here precisely that we cannot help receiving mixed feelings of pleasure and pity from his intellectual analytical poetry. There is no dearth, certainly, of pleasure in his poetry. But it is really a pity that such a sharp analytical brain as his which could release in quick successions a number of intellectually imagi-

native fireworks and concrete splendours of even fantastic, learned imagery and vocabulary, was hardly utilised to explain its own native luminous region and come to an understanding with its own multiple being and structure.

But then it is the limitation of not only the ratiocinative mind of Donne or of the seventeenth century Metaphysical mind. The European mind itself, even when it is at the height of its own imaginative powers, is somehow subject to this limitation. This becomes eminently clear when we read the following account of the Mind and its various hierarchical modes of working and expression from an integral mystic seer and philosopher like Sri Aurobindo :

"...we perceive a graduality of ascent, a communication with a more and more deep and immense light and power from above, a scale of intensities which can be regarded as so many stairs in the ascension of Mind or in a descent into Mind from That which is beyond it. We are aware of a sealike downpour of masses of a spontaneous knowledge which assumes the nature of Thought but has a different character from the process of thought to which we are accustomed; for there is nothing here of seeking, no trace of mental construction, no labour of speculation or difficult discovery; it is an automatic and spontaneous knowledge from a Higher Mind that seems to be in possession of Truth and not in search of hidden and withheld realities. One observes that this Thought is much more capable than the mind of including at once a mass of knowledge in a single view; it has a cosmic character, not the stamp of an individual thinking. Beyond this Truth-Thought we can distinguish a greater illumination instinct with an increased power and intensity and driving force, a luminosity of the nature of Truth-Sight with thought formulation as a minor and dependent activity. If we accept the Vedic image of the Sun of Truth,—an image which in this experience becomes a reality,—we may compare the action of the Higher Mind to a composed and steady sunshine, the energy of the Illumined Mind beyond it to an outpouring of massive lightnings of flaming sun-stuff. Still beyond can be met a yet greater power of the Truth-Force, an intimate and exact Truth-vision, Truth-thought, Truth-sense, Truth-feeling, Truth-action, to which we can give in a special sense the name of Intuition; for though we have applied that word for want of a better to any supra-intellectual direct way of knowing, yet what we actually know as intuition is only one special movement of self-existent knowledge....At the source of this Intuition we discover a superconscient cosmic Mind in direct contact with the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, an original intensity determinant of all movements below it and all mental energies,—not Mind as we know it, but an Overmind that covers as with the wide wings of some creative Oversoul this whole lower hemisphere of Knowledge-Ignorance, links it with that greater Truth-Consciousness while yet at the same time with its brilliant golden Lid it veils the face of the greater Truth from our sight, intervening with its flood of

infinite possibilities as at once an obstacle and a passage in our seeking of the spiritual law of our existence, its highest aim, its secret Reality."[1]

There is hardly any poem by Donne, or, for the matter of that, by any other English poet, where we become "aware of a sealike downpour of masses of a spontaneous knowledge which assumes the nature of thought but has a different character from the process of thought to which we are accustomed". In some of the intensely written passages of a Shakespearean tragedy we do become "aware of a sealike downpour", but it is the downpour of some passion or vehement feeling, not of "thought" as experienced and understood by Sri Aurobindo. Milton is a supreme example of intellect in English poetry, but the Miltonic intellect is not of that quality in which "there is nothing...of seeking, no trace of mental construction, no labour of speculation or difficult discovery". He is hardly able to establish contact with that "Higher Mind that seems to be in possession of Truth and not in search of hidden and withheld realities". We get a glimpse of this thought-power or Truth-feeling or Truth-vision in some of the poems of Blake such as *The Tiger* or the one on the Sun-flower, in Wordsworth's Immortality Ode or Tintern Abbey poem or some passages of *The Prelude*. Shelley, too, has this vision occasionally. And in our own times we get it occasionally in T. S. Eliot, in a few phrases of his *Four Quartets*, for example. But these are just a few sparks of a momentary, fleeting nature. The kind of sustained and sublime, opulent and wide Truth-vision or Truth-thought we get in the Vedic and Upanishadic poetry is hardly available in English poetry. In Sri Aurobindo's poetry, of course, we get plenty of it. Not merely in *Savitri* which is quite obviously written from a high Overhead plane of consciousness and inspiration, but even in such small poems as *The Rose of God* or *Thought the Paraclete* or *The Bride of Fire* or those which constitute his *Last Poems*, we taste this extraordinary experience. But then Sri Aurobindo's poetry has hardly yet found a place in English literature. It is unfortunately not yet recognised as a part of the English literary heritage or wealth. Most probably, the whole range of experiences and visions and truths which Sri Aurobindo's poetry unfolds before us is so new and strange to the European sensibility—though it should not be so, truly speaking, for the Truth-vision or Truth-thought is no monopoly of any particular region or race of the earth—that it will take some time before it is admitted to the literary tradition of the English language.

Anyway, when placed beside the poems mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the poverty of Donne's mental range and sensibility becomes apparent, and we begin to feel in an increasing degree how extremely exaggerated T. S. Eliot's claim about the "sensibility" of the poets of the seventeenth century is. Did they actually possess "a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any

[1] *The Life Divine* (American Edition), pp. 254-55.

kind of experience" ? Quite clearly, not. It is, first of all, quite ignorant of all those ranges of the Higher Mind, Intuition, Overmind, and Supermind, sketchily indicated in the passage from *The Life Divine* cited above. It does not have even the perceptive powers and fine mystic experiences which Vaughan and Traherne and Blake, and at times Wordsworth and Shelley, had. It is no less incapable of formulating in apparently intellectual terms the kind of experiences and truths which T.S. Eliot's poetic sensibility, in our own times, has been able to unfold to us with such poignancy and incantatory rhythm and language in his *Four Quartets*. But this is not all, for there is also Prof. Clay Hunt who by his fine and sober critical scrutiny of Donne's poetry draws our attention in the concluding chapter of his book, to some of the obvious limitations of Donne's sensibility which it is really difficult to gloss over even for the warmest admirer of Donne. It is not a blind or sentimental attachment to traditionalism or conservative taste but a balanced and cool-hearted sobriety of the critical mind which compels Prof. Clay Hunt to speak out in the following manner, after he has fully and thoroughly and even with warm appreciation analysed and evaluated seven of Donne's famous and quite representative and mature poems :

"To place Donne's work beside that of Marlowe, Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare, or of Jonson, Browne, and Milton—those writers of the Elizabethan age and the seventeenth century who seem to me Donne's peers or his superiors —is certainly to see both the limitations of his sensibility and the limits to the kinds of experience which his poetry could master. If he achieved, however precariously, a unification of sensibility in his work, it was only by filtering out much of what comprises the sensibility of most men ; and if he devoured all kinds of experience, many of those experiences were so badgered and mauled about in the process by which his mind assimilated them that they appear in his work in forms which bear little resemblance to the textural qualities which they normally have in the lives of others. It is true that Donne's mind could hold in one thought concrete physical fact and abstract metaphysical theory, and that his poetry, at its best, could achieve a unification of thought and feeling and of wit and seriousness. But these are only certain selected elements in experience which are often dissociated, and only selected poetic effects which are not always conjoined. They are, to be sure, some of the particular elements which Eliot and Ezra Pound were anxious to see combined in poetry at the time when they were trying to accomplish a poetic revolution and to create a New Poetry for the twentieth century in much the same way that Donne and Jonson had created a New Poetry for the seventeenth century ; and it was for this reason that Eliot cried us off Milton and Tennyson and sent us all back to Donne. But to suggest in any way that Donne's poetry comprehends a great range of human experience seems to me gravely misleading."[1]

[1] Clay Hunt, *Donne's Poetry*, pp. 118-19.

And the rest of this concluding chapter in Hunt's book, which is a really fruitful reading, is a detailed, point-by-point examination of the "things that Donne's poetry is not", of the "great range of human experience" which even the so-called unified and unifying sensibility of Donne could not comprehend or fruitfully utilize. This Prof. Hunt does, not in order to disparage Donne in any way, whom he—and quite rightly—so warmly admires; but in order to make us see, soberly and quietly, what Donne's poetry really is. It is a balanced and sober and really constructive criticism of Donne's poetry which he gives us, and not a destructive one. And, truly speaking, this kind of sober, fair-minded criticism of Donne was necessary when Donne's enthusiastic admirers of the nineteen twenties and thirties, such as, T.S. Eliot, Joan Bennett and F.R. Leavis, had come to make and, almost with a missionary zeal, establish and popularise extremely eggagerated claims about him. Another interesting thing which Clay Hunt does in this chapter is to show us how there are poets of this very Metaphysical school who are in certain respects superior to Donne. True, even T.S. Eliot wrote an admirable essay on Andrew Marvell and gave his poetry, though small and scanty, high praise. But he failed to make any fine distinction between the sensibility of Donne and that of Marvell. This Clay Hunt does with admirable perspicacity and acuteness, though necessarily briefly due to exigencies of space. Referring to the two stanzas from Marvell's *Thoughts in a Garden*,—already quoted before in this article—he says:

"...here the subtlety is not just intellectual: Marvell has a perception of emotional subtleties, of nuances of feeling and sensation to which Donne's poetic imagination was either blank or insensitive. And Marvell's cool propriety of mind, which shows in the sure artistic tact that tells him just how much of what will be enough for the unified effect of this kind of poem, is also something which Donne rarely attained...His [i.e. Donne's] headlong impetuousity of intellect makes his thought much more original and exciting than Marvell's, but it can wreck poems, as a glance through the whole body of Donne's verse abundantly demonstrates."[1]

Then again, the comparison by Prof. Hunt of Milton and Donne as religious poets on the basis of Donne's *Hymn to God, my God, in my sickness* and Milton's *At a Solemn Music* is no less illuminating and shows up something of the desirable ranges of religious and aesthetic experiences which were beyond Donne's reach. "One feels immediately", says he, referring to Milton's poem, "the magnificence of the verse music, beside which Donne's is thin indeed. One sees also Milton's full and easy imaginative response to the myth of the Heavenly City in Revelation, whereas Donne in the first stanza of his poem has abstracted from that myth only those details which bear an intellectual relation to the structure of his thought in his conceits. What occupies Milton's imagination for eleven lines served

[1] Clay Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

Donne, in his first stanza, for only a line and a half...'Thy Music' and 'Thy Choir of Saints' are the only details which Donne found of use in the great baroque canvas of St. John's vision...Donne's imagination has responded to the myth conceptually and analytically and the myth stimulates him to intellectual analogies. Though he must have felt some response to the sensory and emotive suggestions of the scene which he is presenting, he did not concern himself to call them up in his poem. The harmony to which he is 'tuning' his soul is an intellectual accord with the Mind of God, and it is arrived at in the poem by a process of logical argument. But in Milton's lines one is hardly made aware of the intellectual implications of the scene...The harmony of soul which Milton contemplates is primarily an emotional harmony, and his major concern in the poem is to suggest the emotional texture of a sense of accord with the Mind of God. And in communicating this feeling of serenity and joy, his imagination recreates the myth of heaven in full pictorial and auditory terms, terms in which Donne's imagination does not operate."[1] And Clay Hunt concludes his observation here by saying: "If one wished to illustrate the 'unification of sensibility' in Renaissance poetry, to find an example of a poetic sensibility which had not been 'dissociated' into separate components of thought and feeling, I think no poem by Donne, or by any of the other Metaphysical poets, would provide so good an illustration as this poem of Milton's, a poem in which observed fact blends with the constructs of the imagination, and in which thought gradually evolves out of physical sensation and emotion to function together with them in a unified and fully organic pattern of consciousness."[2]

A sober comparison between Milton and Donne as religious poets also reveals to Prof. Clay Hunt that "the most striking quality of the greater part of Donne's religious poetry is not its intensity but its emotional poverty. When one gets away from those *Hymns*, part of *The Litany*, and the *Holy Sonnets* into the rest of his religious poetry, one finds, for the most part, verse as coldly intellectualised and as dully ingenious as Donne's commendatory epistles to Noble Ladies. In these meditative poems Donne's meditation tends to take the form of an intellectual fussing around with theological concepts, doctrinal paradoxes, and ambiguities on words. They seem forced or pointless twitchings of the analytical mind in a state of 'holy discontent', and only rarely do they spring to life in passages of intellectual intensity or organised imaginative power. I find the same spiritlessness behind the lengthy logical ingenuities of most of Donne's sermons : they suggest and intellect doggedly—and at times, I think, compulsively—analyzing and analyzing, but the analysis is rarely exciting even as thought, and the sermons come alive artistically only in occasional great passages of drama and rhetoric. The life of those great passages, moreover, is often of a peculiarly

[1] Clay Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

strained and melodramatic kind."[1]

Well, it may be rather difficult for a warm admirer of Donne's poetry and prose sermons to agree with Prof. Clay Hunt in entirety. Every reader of Donne's sermons may not find the kind of spiritlessness which Prof. Hunt has felt therein, or "the peculiarly strained and melodramatic" defect in Donne's great passages of drama and rhetoric. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that if wit, intellectual ingenuity, analytical reasoning and ratiocination are some of Donne's strong points, they also impose fairly heavy limitations upon his poetry and even render it dry and dull, or at best brilliantly spiritless, particularly when Donne is interested to show off rather than reveal himself. Donne's practice and Eliot's poetic theory as well as practice have shown us that intellect can play an appreciable part in the poetic activity, that poetry, good poetry need not always be a thing of mere sighs and tears, emotional outbursts and excitements. Nor need it be entirely unpremeditated or so completely spontaneous an overflow of feelings and words that the poet does not at all know what he is doing or what is happening to him and within him or that for producing the best poetic effects he should entirely suspend his powers of judgment. But this should not drive a poet to the other extreme, to the extreme, for example, to which even such a talented poet as Donne allowed himself to go when he was not quite himself or on his guard, as a poet. If under the influence of the cult of intellect or critical consciousness one allows oneself to be overpowered by an intellect which is doggedly analysing or unnecessarily, even if brilliantly, fussing about amidst a cluster of concepts, doctrines, ideas, puns, ambiguities etc. and if, violently reacting against the poetry of sentiments and emotions and descriptions, particularly of the idealistic, romantic kind, one ignores altogether the pictorial and auditory, the sensory and emotive aspects of poetry and refuses to have any dealing whatsoever with what is noble and heroic and sublime and lofty in human aspiration and experience; if one's constant preoccupation with one's critical mind or intellectual realism obliges one to think of man as only a civilised beast or an infrarational animal or just a useless speck of dust inexorably condemned to a life of sin and suffering only, then the least we would like to say is that such a poet has hardly even the intellect worth the name. He has no sense of the poetic tradition which has been coming down to us from time immemorial. He has a poor understanding of both himself and the being called man, and little awareness of the evolving world around him. He has no imagination to lift him above the surface of life or enable him to see beyond his narrow range of vision. And above all, he has a very restricted knowledge of the poetic acitvity, the poetic process and the poetic inspiration. He is a dilettante and not an artist at all.

The popularity of Donne in modern times is, therefore, both a boon and a danger. In order to profit by the intellectual and technical properties of his

[1] Clay Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

poetry, its profusion of wit and conceits and paradoxes, its thought-spinning and dialectical gyrations, one must be properly and intelligently aware of the limitations of the kind of intellectual, analytical poetry which Donne and his associates wrote. One must be able to see them in the proper perspective, both imaginative and historical. One should be able to see them in relation to the major Elizabethans like Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, to Milton and Browne, to the members of his own group like Herbert, Vaughan, Marvell and Crashaw, all of whom not only refused to remain confined to the dialectical ingenuities of Donne's intellectual imagination but also fruitfully tapped and utilised the sensory and emotive and spiritual sensibilities which have always remained some of the glories of the poetic art all the world over. The cult of intellect and reasoning or wit and paradox is not all in poetry. It is but a poor and, when followed fanatically, a dangerous cult. The best poetry of the world has hardly been written with intellect alone, however sharp and profound. Even T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* is not a product of sheer intellect. And if in our enthusiasm for Donne and the other Metaphysical poets of the 17th century we think little or slightingly of the kind of sensibility and imagination which Milton possessed and so profusely and magnificently used in his great poems, or which the great Romantics or even the great Victorians like Tennyson, Browning, Arnold and Swinburne possessed, or Hopkins and Yeats and D.H. Lawrence and Edward Thomas, for example, have revealed in modern poetry, we are bound to lead English poetry to a blind and arid alley. [Already there is a lot of real spiritual and imaginative barrenness in modern English poetry. Intellectual ingenuity is there quite all right and, of course, a good deal of exquisite ambiguity and obscurity. It may be called brilliant in a way. But what a brilliant failure most of it is ! The poets of the 'fifties like John Wain, Donald Davie, D.J. Enwright, Elizabeth Jennings, Philip Larkin, are striking, they say, 'new lines' in English poetry. But where do these 'lines' really lead to ? The 'lines' are not even straight, truly speaking, although the poets do their best to keep them shipshape. But what, really, is 'new' in them ? These are at best an attempt—honest, sophisticated, intelligent, well-meant—to put some of the old wine in new bottles. But, strangely enough, neither the wine is sufficiently 'old' nor the bottles are durably or even as honestly as they declare them to be, 'new'.

It will be good, therefore, if the modernist English poets of today carefully try to recapture the Spenserian or Shakespearean or Miltonic spirit once again, modifying it, of course, to suit the life and taste of the 20th century. [Then they have got to revise their attitude towards the great Romantics including Shelley. It will not do at all to declare with a sense of breezy or brazen superiority that Shelley is an adolescent poet for a man of adolescent taste or that his poetic wings are luminous but ineffectual. But above all, it is some of the best mystic writers like Blake, Traherne, Vaughan, Hopkins, A.E., Coventry Patmore, Edward Carpenter, whom they have to learn to appreciate and whose tradition they

have to carry forward. Mystic poetry is not just religious poetry or poetry dominated by some religious, theological beliefs and symbols. It is spiritual poetry in the truest and best sense of the term. And it is in the realm of the spirit, and not that of the analytical, scientific, intellectual mind, that the poets of today and tomorrow can discover and gather new pearls of value which would be powerful enough not only to mould their thought, feeling and imagination but their very exterior, physical, material and scientific life. But before the poetry of the Spirit, of the Higher Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Overmind, and above all the Supermind, can be appreciated and written, it is essential that the writer must be himself awakened in his own spirit. He must discover his own hidden psychic—and not merely intellectual or emotional—being, his soul and be in constant contact with it and allow it to govern and guide his whole life, including his artistic, poetic life. It is here that he will find the works of Sri Aurobindo richly and profoundly rewarding. These will quicken his psychic being to life and change his entire consciousness, including the poetic consciousness. And Sri Aurobindo's poetry will show him the ways and forms in which his spiritual awakening can seek to express itself in the poetic medium. The English mind must be, therefore, prepared to recognize the new contributions which Sri Aurobindo's poetry has made in such an ample and splendid manner. Here are the really new lines of development to be seen, and the sooner the English poetic as well as critical taste and sensibility discover this truth, the better and brighter is the future of English poetry bound to be. At any rate, the West must now turn to the East for its inspiration and guidance. In it alone lies its salvation, and certainly its future, for in its own material, scientific, intellectual civilisation and perception it has now reached almost its dead end. Reason was the helper to the ancient Greek mind and civilisation. It continued to be so during the period of European Renaissance. And it almost reached the peak of its attainment in the 19th and early 20th centuries. But this very magnificent faculty of Reason has now definitely become a bar particularly in the Atomic Age which it itself has helped to usher in. It must be prepared now to recognise its own limits and to allow the higher mental and supramental powers to descend and fruitfully re-energise and transform and re-create and lift up its consciousness and life, so long pulled down by the ignorant forces of Matter and Life and Intellect below. This will not mean the death or extinction of mind or reason. Reason and rationality will remain but will be controlled and moulded by the Supramental Light. Indeed, the mind of man can reach its truest and highest attainment or fulfilment only when it accepts the guardianship and leadership of the Supermind.

Seen in this light, it becomes evident that the change in the technique of poetry can be truly effective, the revolution in the language and rhythm and fromal structure of poetry can be real and radical, only when the consciousness, including the poetic consciousness of the modern man undergoes a psychical

and spiritual re-orientation. T.S. Eliot said that sensibility alters from generation to generation in everybody, whether we will or no ; but expression is only altered by a man of genius. But the truth of the matter is not so simple as this. A man of genius is a genius not only because he possesses the gift of changing poetic expression but because he is capable of allowing his consciousness—his whole being, that is—to undergo a radical change and it is this which modifies his expression, causes almost a revolution in the linguistic means and mode or his communication. Today most modern poets have changed the idiom and rhythm and imagery of their poetry under the belief that a new sensibility has compelled them to do so for its own precise and honest expression. But has the sensibility really undergone a radical and truly revolutionary transformation ? Is Eliot's *Waste land* the product of such a changed sensibility? There may be a little bit of historical change but there is nothing radical or fundamental about it. Swinburne's *The Garden of Proserpine* and *A Forsaken Garden* show the same sensibility more or less. And the difference in the linguistic, syntactical and rhythmic expression of Swinburne and Eliot is consequently of hardly any real significance, though it is true that the poet of today will feel more drawn towards Eliot's free verse and formless pattern and new 'unpoetic' language. But the technique of *Four Quartets* is different from that of the *Waste land* because here the very poetic consciousness or sensibility is comparatively radically different. But neither the intellectual, paradoxical wit of Donne nor the mentalised self-conscious incantatory rhythm of the Eliot of *Four Quartets* is adequate for the purposes for which the poetry of tomorrow is waiting to be born. There must be "the stress of soul-vision behind the word" as Sri Aurobindo said. We have to remind ourselves once again like the ancient poet-seers that "neither the intelligence, the imagination nor the ear are the true recipients of the poetic delight, even as they are not its true creators ; they are only its channels and instruments : the true creator, the true hearer is the soul".[1]

The twentieth century is, therefore, waiting for the return of the poet as a Rishi, a Truth-seer, for even the best genius of intellect or intellectual imagination will not serve its needs. And then only will poetry be once again a dynamic instrument of Light and Life, capable of transmuting the very innermost fibres and mechanisms of man's consciousness so as to create suitably new forms of his external expression and living, as it so largely did in the Vedic and Upanishadic times. But in times that are to come the effectivity and applicability of such a Truth-inspired poetry will be still more widespread and dynamic, for it will have such cosmic sweep and range and imaginative daring as will dazzle even the most far-seeing Space-Scientists of today. In the past it was the Sanskrit language which performed this miracle ; the greater miracle of the future now awaits the English language.

SREEKRISHNA PRASAD

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, p. 13.

Glimpses of Mallarmé

SOME TRANSLATIONS

(*Continued from the previous Number*)

DON DU POÈME

JE t'apporte l'enfant d'une nuit d'Idumée !
Noire, à l'aile saignante et pâle, déplumée,
Par le verre brûlé d'aromates et d'or,
Par les carreaux glacés, hélas ! mornes encor,
L'aurore se jeta sur la lampe angélique,
Palmes ! et quand elle a montré cette rélique
A ce père essayant un sourire ennemi,
La solitude bleue et stérile a fremi.
O la berceuse, avec ta fille et l'innocence
De vos pieds froids, accueille une horrible naissance :
Et ta voix rappelant viole et clavecin,
Avec le doigt fané presseras-tu le sein
Par qui coule en blancheur sibylline la femme
Pour les lèvres que l'air du vierge azur affame ?

MALLARMÉ, 1865

GIFT OF A POEM

I bring thee the child of an Idumaean night !
Black, with wing bleeding, pale, a featherless flight,
Through the glass burnt with incense and gold fume,
Through the panes frosted and still hung with gloom,
Dawn bursts in triumph on the lamp angelic,
Palms ! and, when sharp-revealed confronts this relic
Its sire shaping to an enemy smile his mood,
Shudders the blue and sterile solitude.
O nursing mother with babe and cold pure feet,
A horrible birth wilt thou with kindness greet

And by thy voice of viol and harp give rest
And make thy faded finger coax the breast
Whence flows in sibylline whiteness woman bare
For lips made hungry by virgin azure air ?

2-4-1955

D'HÉRODIADE*

La Nourrice : Sinon la myrrhe gaie en ses bouteilles closes,
De l'essence ravie aux vieillesses de roses
Voulez-vous, mon enfant, essayer la vertu
Funèbre ?

Hérodiade : Laisse-là ces parfums ! ne sais-tu
Que je les hais, nourrice, et veux-tu que je sente
Leur ivresse noyer ma tête languissante ?...
Assez ! Tiens devant moi ce miroir.
O miroir !
Eau froide par l'ennui dans ton cadre gelée
Que de fois et pendant les heures, desolée
Des songes et cherchant mes souvenirs qui sont
Comme des feuilles sous ta glace au trou profond,
Je m'apparus en toi comme une ombre lointaine,
Mais, l'horreur ! des soirs, dans ta sévère fontaine,
J'ai de mon rêve épars connu la nudité !
Nourrice, suis-je belle ?

N : Un âstre, en vérité...
...et pour qui, dévorée
D'angoisses, gardez-vous la splendeur ignorée
Et le mystère vain de votre être ?...

H : ...Tu m'as vue, ô nourrice d'hiver,
Sous la lourde prison de pierres et de fer
Où de mes vieux lions traînent les siècles fauves
Entrer, et je marchais, fatale, les mains sauves,
Dans le parfum désert de ces anciens rois...

* This piece makes in places a reconstruction of parts of the original without, of course, changing the words, and at one place two parts widely separated are put together because of their affinity.

Mais qui me toucherait, des lions respectée ?
Du reste, je ne veux rien d'humain et, sculptée,
Si tu me vois les yeux perdus au paradis,
C'est quand je me souviens de ton lait bu jadis.

N : Victime lamentable à son destin offerte !

H : Oui, c'est pour moi, pour moi, que je fleuris, déserte !
Vous le savez, jardins d'améthyste, enfouis,
Sans fin dans de savants abîmes éblouis,
Ors ignorés, gardant votre antique lumière
Sous le sombre sommeil d'une terre première,
Vous, pierres où mes yeux comme de purs bijoux
Empruntent leur clarté mélodieuse, et vous
Métaux qui donnez à ma jeune chevelure
Une splendeur fatale et sa massive allure !
Quant à toi, femme née en des siècles malins
Pour la méchanceté des antres sibyllins,
Qui parles d'un mortel ! selon qui, des calices
De mes robes, arôme aux farouches délices,
Sortirait le frisson blanc de ma nudité,
Prophétise que si le tiède azur d'été,
Vers lui nativement la femme se dévoile,
Me voit dans ma pudeur grelottante d'étoile,
Je meurs !
J'aime l'horreur d'être vierge et je veux
Vivre parmi l'effroi que me font mes cheveux
Pour, le soir, retirée en ma couche, reptile
Inviolé sentir en la chair inutile
Le froid scintillement de ta pâle clarté
Toi qui te meurs, toi qui brûles de chasteté,
Nuit blanche de glaçons et de neige cruelle !...

MALLARMÉ, 1865

From HÉRODIADE

Nurse : If not gay myrrh which crystal tube encloses,
Of essence robbed from the old age of roses
Wilt thou not try the charm funereal ?

Hérodiade : Leave there the perfumes : I abhor their call;
Wouldst thou I felt their warm intoxicance
Submerge this head that lives in languid trance ?...
Enough ! Hold up the mirror.
O glass bare !
Chill water, frozen weariness enframed,
How many times, for long hours, left unclaimed
By dreams and seeking memories that are
Sunk leaves below your ice-profundities,
I to myself appeared a shade afar,
But, horror ! on some eves in your severe
Fount have I known of my sparse reveries
The nudeness. Am I lovely ?

N : Star-flame sheer !...
For whom, by anguish eaten, dost thou hold
Thy glory ignored, a vain life mystery-souled ?...

H : Grey nurse, thou hast watched me go, immaculate, down
Where in the heavy prison of steel and stone
Old lions drag their tawny centuries.
Fatal, I have breathed—unweaponed arms at ease—
The desert perfume of those ancient kings...
One that came free of leonine hungerings,
Shall man touch ? Man I crave not. If perchance
Thou seest me sculpture-still with paradised glance,
Know that I dream thy milk my child-lips drained.

N : Lamentable victim by self-love ordained !

H : Yes, ever for me I flower, for me alone !
O amesthystine gardens, this you have known,
Endlessly hid in cunning dazzled deeps—
You too, forgotten gold whose lustre keeps
A sombre reverie under primal earth,
And all stone-brightnesses from whom takes birth
The sparkled music of my gem-clear gaze,
And you, metals that make my young hair blaze
A doomful splendour and a massive lure !
For thee, wise guardian fooled in an age impure
By sibyl caves, even as thy rumour rose
That, mortal-touched, I from my calyx of clothes,

Aromatic ever of fierce ecstasy,
Would break in a white shudder of nudity,
Prophesy that if summer's tender blue
Towards which a woman is born to unveil shall view
The shivering star of my shame, I'll know death's blight!

The horror of virginity I love,
I'd dwell mid fears my locks breathe when they move,
So, curled in my couch at eve, inviolate
Reptile, I'd feel in my flesh' useless fate
The scintillating freeze of your pale light,
O you that die to yourself in chastity's glow,
White night of clotted ice and cruel snow !...

7-4-1955

CANTIQUE DE SAINT JEAN

Le soleil que sa halte
Surnaturelle exalte
Aussitôt redescend
Incandescent

Je sens comme aux vertèbres
S'éployer des ténèbres
Toutes dans un frisson
A l'unisson

Et ma tête surgie
Solitaire vigie
Dans les vols triomphaux
De cette faux

Comme rupture franche
Plutôt refoule ou tranche
Les anciens désaccords
Avec le corps

Qu'elle de jeûnes ivre
S'opiniâtre à suivre
En quelque bond hagard
Son pur regard

Là-haut où la froidure
Eternelle n'endure
Que vous le surpassiez
Tous ô glaciers

Mais selon un baptême
Illuminée au même
Principe qui m'élut
Penche un salut.

MALLARMÉ, 1865

CANTICLE OF SAINT JOHN

Sun, that a supernatural pause
Lifts high in the inane,
Downward as swiftly draws
Gold heat again.

I feel deep darknesses run
Through the spine's broken cord,
All shuddering in one
Icy accord

And, with lone vigil-sight,
A lifting of my head
Amid the triumph-flight
Of the sickle's blade,

Even as a rupture clean
Drives back or cuts away
The old dissonance between
Spirit and clay.

Let the head, drunk with bare
Fastings, be firm to chase
With haggard leap in the air
Its own pure gaze

Up where the Cold with no end
Rules that this chastity fierce
You never shall transcend,
O glaciers !

But, in a baptism of rays,
To the same Law and Root
That missioned all my days
It bows a salute.

16-5-1955

De L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE

...Autre que ce doux rien par leur lèvre ébruité,
Le baiser, qui tout bas de perfides assure,
Mon sein, vierge de preuve, atteste une morsure
Mystérieuse, due à quelque auguste dent ;
Mais, bast ! arcane tel élut pour confident
Le jonc vaste et jumeau dont sous l'azur on joue :
Qui, détournant à soi le trouble de la joue
Rêve, dans un solo long, que nous amusions
La beauté d'alentour par des confusions
Fausses entre elle-même et notre chant crédule;
Et de faire aussi haut que l'amour se module
Evanouir du songe ordinaire de dos
Ou de flanc pur suivis avec mes regards clos,
Une sonore, vaine et monotone ligne.

Tâche donc, instrument des fuites, ô maligne
Syrinx, de refleurir aux lacs où tu m'attends !
Moi, de ma rumeur fier, je vais parler longtemps
Des déesses; et par d'idolâtres peintures,
A leur ombre enlever encore des ceintures :
Ainsi, quand les raisins j'ai sucé la clarté,
Pour bannir un regret par ma feinte écarté,
Rieur, j'élève au ciel d'été la grappe vide
Et, soufflant dans ses peaux lumineuses, avide
D'ivresses, jusqu'au soir je regarde au travers...

MALLARMÉ, 1865

From THE AFTERNOON OF A FAUN

...Besides the dulcet nothing their lips purr,
The kiss that leaves me all too softly sure
Of the faithless fugitive ones, my chest though white
And woundless carries still a subtle bite
Proving some glorious tooth. But hush ! none knew
Such mystery save the ample reed of two
Song-hollows played of old beneath the blue.
This pipe, turning the trouble of the cheek
Inward to itself, now bears one dream : to seek
Through a long solo the pleasuring of seen
Beauties by feigned confusions blown between
Their forms and those our credulous tune creates
And, voice as low as rapt love modulates,
Make with a phantom-faintness disappear
Out of the common dream of a back or bare
Flank followed by these curtained eyes of mine
A sonorous, empty and monotonous line.

Reflower then, instrument of flights, O sly
Syrinx, to give me a tryst beside your lake !
Proud of my rumour, daylong will I make
Music of goddesses, more girdle-strings
Tear from shades built by idol-picturings :
So, when of grapes I have sucked the lucency,
To quell regret the ruse of song puts by,
Laughing I raise toward the summer sky
Their empty bunch and, blowing full the bright
Skins, dreamy-drunk keep gazing through till night...

5-6-1955

K. D. SETHNA

To a Red-Lotus

O splendid-petalled gift of Heaven,
Art thou a courier on earth of the stars seven
Or the ancient Graces three ? Thy secret speak ;
O Red-Lotus, what bliss dost thou seek
To bring here upon earth ? When the Dawn,
With feet of gold, steps on the eastern lawn
Of the azure sky, thou dost towards her turn
And to lengthen her stay here thou dost yearn.
Thou, a vermillion mark on the forehead of Time,
Scornest not earth, thou has sprung from the slime.
With magnificent beauty and unshorn grace,
Thou adornest this earth's sullied face.
To the plundering bees thou open'st thy honey-store,
They come and ransack thy treasure more and more.
Thou lovest all ! In God-like wisdom's lore
Thou livest and lovest. From the days of yore
Thou hast been Beauty's self incarnadine !
The strength and the calm of self-giving are thine.
Thou, a glorious seal of the Supreme,
With thy beauty and grace this earth redeem.

KAMALAKANTO